

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

By The Numbers: (From left) Sgt. 1st Class Scott Kennece, Sgt. Jacob McCormack and Warrant Officer Alisha Kelly demonstrate the steps they took to shut down the Nebraska Military Department's computer network.

Military Department shuts down headquarters, tests ability to carry on

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Explosions, tornados and civil unrest...oh my. Providing timely and sufficient support to civilian first responders is challenging, even in the best of times, for National Guard officials. The Nebraska Military Department, however, recently amped up that

Cover Story

challenge by shutting off the power and communications systems at its Lincoln-based Joint Force Headquarters and dispersing its staff members to alternate work sites – some approximately 100 miles away – and then tasking them to support multiple emergency responses simultaneously during a

remarkable Aug. 27-30 continuity of operations exercise.

The goal of the exercise was to see – definitively – whether or not the Nebraska Military Department could really support a major disaster response while continuing to meet its normal state and federal requirements in the event that the state's Joint Force Headquarters building was

See EXERCISE on 11.

Force restructuring to be 'game-changer' for Nebraska Soldiers

■ Governor Ricketts announces plans to transform 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, other Nebraska Army Guard units across state

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

Governor Pete Ricketts and Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac announced the first major restructuring of the Nebraska Army National Guard in 20 years during a news conference held at the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters on Nov. 17.

Nearly one in three Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers will be affected by the changes which include an expansion of missions led by the Nebraska Army National Guard in Central Nebraska and the Panhandle.

The changes impact roughly 1,100 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers located in units across the state in 16 Nebraska communities. The changes are part of a much larger reorganization taking place nationally across the Army National Guard affecting numerous states.

"Today is the beginning of an

exciting new era for the Nebraska Army National Guard as it undergoes its largest force restructuring in roughly 20 years," said Governor Ricketts. "These changes will dramatically increase military occupational specialty training opportunities in the western and central regions of our state. Congratulations to Major General Bohac and his entire team as they pursue these new missions."

In Nebraska, the biggest change will involve the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance (BFSB) headquarters, which like other similar battlefield surveillance brigades, is being deactivated along with a number of its subordinate units. The Nebraska BFSB will be replaced by a Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and similar supporting units.

The changes will affect units in Lincoln, Omaha, Beatrice, Columbus, York, Hastings, Kearney, Grand Island, Mead, O'Neill, Broken Bow, North Platte, McCook, Sidney,

See FORCE STRUCTURE on 4.

Recently deployed Airmen receive warm welcome home in September

By 1st Lt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Air National Guard welcomed home 232 Airmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Sept. 19, at the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Nebraska. The ceremony was held to officially welcome the Airmen home from deployments that took

them to various locations around the globe between July 2014 and August 2015.

The Airmen were deployed between 30 days and nine months on missions to the Middle East, Europe and the Pacific.

Nebraska Lt. Gov. Mike Foley thanked the Airmen and their families for their sacrifices and reminded the crowd how important their service is.

"The world is changing," said Foley. "We

live in a dangerous world. But all of you know that so well. And despite the knowledge of the risks and the danger of the world, you step forward anyway and you serve us so valiantly, so honorably, so capably. I want you to know how deeply we appreciate what you do for all of us."

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general, highlighted the work the Nebraska Air National Guard has done in the 14 years

since the terror attacks of 9/11. He said for the first time since 9/11, there was a time this August when the Nebraska Air National Guard didn't have a single Airman deployed... but for only three days.

"Our operation tempo is anything but routine," said Bohac. "It reflects the dynamic and dangerous world we live in today. I'm incredibly proud of your accomplishments."

See WELCOME on 4.

Nebraska Army Guard leader discusses state's challenges during visit to National Guard Bureau

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Photojournalist

When top officials left Nebraska and traveled to the nation's capital to deliver the Nebraska Army National Guard's state of the state message to National Guard Bureau leaders, Sept. 22, they laid out three main issues facing Nebraska over the next several years.

The goal, said Brig. Gen. Richard Dahlman, Nebraska Army National Guard assistant adjutant general who delivered the briefing to Lt. Gen. Tim Kadavy and his aides, was to ensure that the National Guard Bureau's top brass is well informed about the state of the Nebraska Army Guard.

Following that briefing, Dahlman spelled out the three main challenges facing Nebraska Soldiers, families and the entire

See STATE OF STATE on 5.

New boom simulator increases readiness while cutting costs

By Senior Airman Marshall Mauer
Staff Photojournalist

Streaming through the atmosphere roughly 12,000 feet above a rolling landscape, an Airman from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing lies on his stomach in a KC-135 Stratotanker boom pod, his hands tense on the controls.

"Start guiding in the receiving plane," a voice tells him.

The Airman may feel nervous, but the voice of a B-1 Lancer pilot sounds calm as he receives permission to approach. Using a series of tracking lights the Nebraska Airman guides the B-1 closer: to within ten feet, then five, then two, causing the approaching bomber to fill the Airman's viewscreen, the smallest details of the airplane popping out.

From air refueling operator's viewpoint, the extending boom seems to touch its own shadow on the jet nose. It squeezes past the white 'fishbone' pattern painted on the

See SIMULATOR on 13.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Thach

Important Training: Master Sgt. Mark Stocking, a Nebraska Air National Guard boom operator, hones his skills refueling an aircraft in the newly acquired boom operator simulator located at the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 25. The Nebraska Air Guard is the first Guard unit to receive the BOSS 59-1495.

Inside



Nebraska medics compete for bragging rights in September

See story and photos on 3.



Guard's top shooters challenge for top honors

See story and photos on 19.

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NEWS DIGEST

■Defense secretary, vice chair pay tribute to families of fallen

WASHINGTON (DoD News) — The family members who return to the Pentagon each year to mark the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks set an example of strength and resilience for others, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said Sept. 11 at the Pentagon Memorial’s Patriot Day ceremony to honor all those who died there 14 years ago.

Carter and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva were joined by their wives at the memorial during a wreath-laying ceremony to honor the families and victims. Terrorists flew American Airlines Flight 77 into the west side of the Pentagon, near where the memorial is now located, killing 184 service members, Defense Department employees, as well as aircraft passengers and crew.

There was a moment of silence at 9:37 a.m., the time the plane struck the building, as families and dignitaries gathered at the memorial under the American flag that drapes the Pentagon each year on this day from sunrise to sundown. The secretary offered his condolences to the families on behalf of DoD for their losses and the burdens they continue to carry, he said.

“We cannot fully appreciate how much your lives changed, or how much you lost on this morning 14 years ago today,” Carter said.

“We cannot understand how it has felt on every day since, to long for their laugh, or to see their smile, or to feel their embrace,” he said. “We simply cannot comprehend the weight of their absence. But for me, and for so many others at the Pentagon, the weight of their memory, and our duty to honor it, is something we carry with us every day.”

The memory of each individual is an ever-present reminder, Carter said, “To cherish each day with those who love us, to stay vigilant against those who would harm us, to remain guided by the values that have always made us great.”

It takes a great deal of courage to come back on this day every year, Selva, the nation’s second highest-ranking military officer told the families. “Today is about strength and resolve. We find strength in the children and spouses of the survivors, who carried on and are here to celebrate the memory of their relatives,” he said.

Selva said he saw in audience members the resolve of the nation to defend freedom and liberty wherever it is challenged, he added, “An entire generation of young American men and women have put their lives on the line for the concepts of freedom and liberty that we hold dear.”

During times of grief, people sometimes hold on to a memento reminding them of their loved one, the secretary said, Carter said his reminder is on his desk every day, a piece of the Pentagon that was collected from the rubble and passed down to him by his predecessors.

“Beneath this piece of Indiana limestone reads a simple inscription: ‘To honor the 184 people whose lives were lost, their families, and all those who sacrificed, that we may live in freedom, we will never forget,’” he said.

“(We) do know... what the lives of your loved ones mean to this community and to this nation,” Carter said. “And I hope you know that by returning here to the Pentagon each year, you set an example of strength and resilience for all of us.”

“Terrorists who hope to intimidate us will find no satisfaction and no success in threatening the United States,” the secretary said. “Because not only do we come back, but by living in honor of those we have lost, we come back stronger than ever before.”

■Cybersecurity demands culture change, Defense Department official says

WASHINGTON (DoD News) — A change in culture is needed to protect against threats in the rapidly changing cyber domain, the Defense Department’s chief information officer said Sept. 19.

“What keeps me awake is ‘Will we get the cyber culture right?’” said Terry Halvorsen, opening a daylong cybersecurity meeting of government and industry experts. At the 6th Annual Billington Cybersecurity Summit, Halvorsen highlighted three areas in cyber culture he said need to be addressed: discipline, economics and enterprise.

Cyber, the fifth domain in warfare, is different from other warfare areas because of the rapid speed at which things change, he said. With the evolving threats, the thinking on cybersecurity needs to evolve as well. “Culture is the hardest thing to change,” he said. “That’s why it keeps me awake at night.”

The United States is dependent on cyber more than probably any other nation, certainly more than any other military in the world, he said. While that gives America some “really powerful advantages” in warfare and business, he said, it also makes it the “most vulnerable to cyber interdiction.”

A threat, whether a criminal or a nation-state, can spend a “fairly small sum of money and cause us to spend quite a bit of money,” Halvorsen said. “Right now, we are on the wrong side of that cyber-economic curve.”

Better discipline, Halvorsen said, would raise the “cost of entry,” thwarting some of the smaller players. “Today almost anybody with a laptop, a little bit of sense and a little bit of money can go on the Internet, download some tools and cause a problem,” he said.

There is a need for a culture and understanding that there are “rules of engagement” and “rules of the road that apply whether you are inside DoD or frankly if you are on your own (computer) system,” he said.

“We are focused on building, generating, sustaining and ensuring we have a ready cyber force within the Department of Defense,” said Air Force Lt. Gen. James “Kevin” McLaughlin, the deputy commander of U.S. Cyber Command.

In 2013, the command embarked upon a “four-year sprint” to bring 133 new cyber teams together across the military services, involving some 6,200 people, he said. The command is about half-way through in creating the teams, he added.

“In some cases, we’re employing these units before they’re even at initial operating

Dust Off



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Needham

On The Way: A CH-47 Chinook from the 2nd Battalion, 135th General Support Aviation Battalion, currently attached to the 185th Theater Aviation Brigade, holds its position while Soldiers from Battery A, 3rd Battalion, 197th Field Artillery Regiment, attach a load during sling load training on Sept. 24, in Al Jaber, Kuwait. Having both aviation and ground assets at the same location allows for more training opportunities that reserve component units may not receive at home station.

capability when they have recognizable units that can function because the need for them is so dire,” McLaughlin said. “We’re aggressively putting capability in the fight.”

“Cyber, unlike probably any other warfare area in the past, is completely ubiquitous in everything we do,” Halvorsen said.

Cyber was made the fifth operational domain in 2010, and the first functional one, he pointed out. “While we’ve held a decisive and dominant advantage in all the other domains, that’s not necessarily the case in the cyber domain,” Skinner said.

■National Guard units - including Nebraska - support papal visit to United States

WASHINGTON, D.C. (NGNEWS) — The D.C. National Guard provided security and traffic control support to local authorities throughout Pope Francis’s Sept. 24 visit to Washington, D.C., his first visit to the United States as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

Elsewhere, New York National Guard personnel provided similar support to local government when the pope visited sites in New York City, Sept. 25, while on Sept. 26-27, the pope conducted eight scheduled stops in Philadelphia, where about 3,600 Pennsylvania troops were on duty.

Nearly 180 members of the New Jersey National Guard were summoned to assist with traffic control.

In the nation’s capital, more than 400 Soldiers and Airmen were on duty providing security assistance and traffic management in several points near the Basilica, along the

parade route, the ellipse and the National Mall. Personnel in Washington supported local authorities to ensure safe and secure events during the visit.

“Our primary mission is to support local authorities to make this a safe event for the thousands of people who will be in the District to see the pope,” said Maj. Gen. Errol R. Schwartz, D.C. National Guard Commanding General.

“We are in direct support of the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, the D.C. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Park Police, and U.S. Secret Service.”

Earlier, on Sept. 22, the D.C. Metropolitan Police swore in D.C. Guardsmen supporting the mission as special police. Guard members from several other states including West Virginia, Massachusetts, Alaska, Kentucky, Delaware, Nebraska, Maryland, and California also supported the mission.

The West Virginia National Guard’s Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package, or CERFP, deployed to D.C. to support the overall mission. The CERFP provides search and rescue, decontamination and medical support in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

Members from other states supported the D.C. National Guard’s 33rd Civil Support Team.

The CSTs were established to deploy rapidly to assist local authorities in determining the nature and extent of natural or manmade disasters; provide expert technical advice on response operations; and help identify and support the arrival of follow-on state and federal military response assets.

Nebraska National Guard’s all new ‘News Site’

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

To our *Prairie Soldier* readership: We’ve been working hard the past few months and are excited to announce the launch of our brand new ‘news site’ on the Nebraska National Guard website.

Now you can read the latest stories right after they happen. No more waiting for the *Prairie Soldier* to come out to get the news.

You can read the stories online at ne.ng.mil/PAO/News/Pages/default.aspx. Or open your browser to the Nebraska National Guard website, ne.ng.mil, and click the ‘News’ tab then click ‘Latest Stories’.

But don’t you worry, we aren’t getting rid of the *Prairie Soldier*. The *Prairie Soldier* will still be used for the more in-depth stories and articles. The *Prairie Soldier* will be used for highlighting annual training season and the end of the year review. So don’t forget to check back every few months for

the newest *Prairie Soldier*.

So, you might be wondering what the latest stories might include. It will include the same complete assortment of Nebraska Army and Air National Guard news and information that were in the *Prairie Soldier* like news articles, sports articles, change of commands, ceremony coverage, features and much more.

But this news site will not only give our readers the opportunity to read the news right after it happens also it will allow for easier social media sharing and readability on your computers, smart phones and tablets.

You can also get updates sent to you via e-mail or text message when a latest story comes out. Log onto the ne.ng.mil website and look for the subscribe area on the footer of the page. After filling out your contact information you can click to subscribe to ‘Stories’.

We hope this news site can reach a larger audience, show our presence in the digital world and continue to tell our stories of the



All New: Nebraska National Guard release all new ‘News Site’ for up-to-date stories and information on the Nebraska National Guard.

Nebraska National Guard.

We hope you all check out our news site at NE.NG.MIL/PAO/NEWS/PAGES/DEFAULT.ASPX and let us know what you think by emailing us at ng.ne.neang.mbx.pao-public@mail.mil.

We are ecstatic with this new platform of telling the Nebraska National Guard’s stories and we think you will be, too.

Prairie Soldier

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Letters, articles, notices of events, photographs and art are welcome, but may be edited for clarity or brevity. Publication of any submission is at the discretion of the editor. Submissions can also be emailed to heidi.mcclintock.mil@mail.mil. All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information.

The views and opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the Military Department of Nebraska or the U.S. Department of Defense.

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All Kinds Of Conditions: Members of the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) work together to evacuate a casualty in a suspected chemical environment.



Preparations: Spc. Kellan Garber, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry, prepares for an upcoming medical challenge by placing pieces of tape on his leg that he will use to record important patient information.



Lifesaving Training: Sgt. Jared Cornell (right) and Pvt. Brian Sydik work together to treat a Soldier who received simulated injuries during a vehicle rollover, Sept. 12, at the Mead Training Site, one of eight training lanes that made up the annual Medic Squad Challenge.

Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Bragging Rights

Guardsmen battle elements, ‘zombies’ during annual day-long Medic Squad Challenge

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Bragging rights were on the line, Sept. 12, when teams of medics representing the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), met on the rolling hills of Mead Training Site for the annual Medic Squad Challenge.

During the course of a single day of intense competition, the medics rushed to gain points for their individual squads while responding to a wide array of tasks involving vehicle roll-overs, mass casualty incidents, low-light medical care, dangerous chemical environments and even a couple of zombies.

Zombies?
“The zombie element was something that I loved,” said Capt. Mathew Field, commander of the 313th Med. Co. that hosted the annual medical competition designed to determine which squad of medics are the best. “Maybe it’s an age group thing, but zombies play.”

Field said in order to help change things up this year, several of the eight separate training lanes involved a zombie scenarios in which the Guard medics had to essentially complete their mission while also dealing with groups of ‘undead’ zombies that made keeping focus on tasks extremely difficult.

For example, during one lane medics had to meet with a local village leader whose community was being terrorized by zombies. Through that meeting – which was interrupted constantly by two ‘zombies’ who slammed pieces of wood against the sides of buildings and floors, making the medic’s communication difficult – the Soldiers had to successfully gain information about the community while also treating a casualty without allowing the zombies to interfere with their work.

Needless to say, it was a near impossible task.



Diplomatic Skills: Sgt. Nathaniel Coldiron speaks with a “village leader” about potential “zombies” who are terrorizing local villagers.

“The zombie piece captures (the Soldiers’) attention. The zombie thing brings them in and that’s when they start focusing on the squad and (whether or not) they’re meeting the mission objectives,” said Field.

“I loved that lane. I loved that element. They will talk about that lane and joke about it for the rest of the year. And that’s what we aimed to do... to provide them with task to mission standard training.”

According to Field, the annual medic squad challenge is designed to challenge medics to take all that they’ve worked on during the course of the year and demonstrate these skills and processes under the all-seeing eyes of evaluators. This year’s event also included a squad of medics from the 1-134th Cavalry.

“That added stressor – that added element of competition against ones’ peers – we feel pulls the best out of our Soldiers,” said Field. “You give them that fire of trying to prove that they are the most capable medical squad in the state. This is something they can be very proud of.”

So much pride, in fact, that it typically becomes a source of bragging rights within the unit and something that can be used as a tiebreaker when two squads find themselves in an argument.

“It goes to kind of a seeding within the company,” Field said. “They will use it as a chip they’ll play when they have a disagreement.”

That competitive spirit and desire to be tops was definitely on display throughout the competition,

which often required the Soldiers to exercise both their minds and muscles to treat casualties in a variety of environments.

“So far, it’s been going pretty good,” said Sgt. Nathaniel Coldiron, a 313th Med. Co. team leader, shortly after he and his squad completed the leader engagement scenario that involved treating a victim who had been bitten by a ‘zombie’ in a makeshift village. “The zombie element makes it a little bit different than what we’ve done in the past.”

Coldiron said the competition was definitely giving his Soldiers the chance to put all of the Soldiering and medical skills to the test. “We’re a pretty young unit with a lot of new Soldiers, so it’s good to get them out to train.”

Sgt. Ryan Polich, a 313th Med. Co. squad leader, agreed.

“It’s a good little physical and mental test for the day,” said Polich, who works as a nurse and paramedic in civilian life. He said the competition was particularly important for those medics who have careers in other fields in civilian life.

“For those who don’t do this every day, it’s much needed training to help them stay proficient on their assessments and their skills, which they could be called upon to use at any time,” said Polich, adding this year’s competition was particularly fun.

“My favorite part is getting out here, interacting and doing some patient care,” he said. “There are zombies and other variables playing into the mix. It just gets your brain working and thinking.”

Another aspect of the event was the fact that it brought together medics from two units, who used the competition to not only attempt to win the coveted title, but also to learn from each other.

“It’s a good application of all of skills collectively,” said Spc. Kellan Garber, a medic with HHT, 1-134th Cavalry, he was one of six Cavalry medics who competed. “You can learn through application as much as you can through observation,”



By Land, By Air: A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter prepares to land at the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) simulated treatment facility.



Putting Their Skills To Use: A team of 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) medics work to carefully move a “casualty” out of a Humvee during the 2015 Medic Squad Challenge.

said Garber, who is currently working toward his bachelor’s degree in Musical Education at Doane College. “It’s nice to see what other units are doing. If you can pick up a few things from others, that’s great. It’s always good to add to your skill set.”

That’s definitely what unit leaders hoped to achieve when designing this year’s competition, said Field. He added that out of the six or seven medical competitions that he’s been a part of, “this was the best medic squad challenges I’ve seen.”

Gray takes 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade’s helm

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Soldiers assigned to the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade welcomed a new commander while wishing farewell to their former leader during a change of command ceremony conducted Aug. 16 at the Spirit of 1776 Armory in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Standing before a formation of Soldiers representing the headquarters and various battalions and companies that make up the brigade, Lt. Col. Rick Gray assumed command of the organization from Brig. Gen. Richard Dahlman, Nebraska Army National Guard assistant adjutant general. Gray replaces Col. Kevin Lyons, who is moving on to an assignment in the Nebraska Army National Guard’s joint force headquarters.

According to Dahlman, Lyons’ tenure will be long remembered as an era of high-paced training that took the organization to a Warfighter exercise at Fort Lewis, Washington, a major exercise at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, and numerous other ones along the way. Dahlman took time to give the members of the brigade special praise for how they handled the pressures of the high operational tempo during the past 18 months. “To our Soldiers, thanks for serving,” said Dahlman. “Thanks for raising your hand once and then coming back weekend after week-



Lyons

end, annual training after annual training. This has been a busy year for the brigade again... thanks for giving it your all and thanks for serving this great nation. Your contributions are noticed as is your service.”

Dalman said Lyons’ leadership helped ensure that the brigade’s Soldiers were successful throughout the exercises. “You were right there with your Soldiers at these events. You sacrificed as well as they did, time and time again. When you took command, your team was on course for an extremely busy year... you and your team knocked it out of the park.”

“Thanks for all your efforts in the past and for what you will do for us in the future,” he said. Lyons is a native of Gibbon, Nebraska, where he graduated from Gibbon High School in 1984. He also earned a bachelor of Science degree in Education from Kearney State College and a master of arts degree in School Administration from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. He also recently completed his master of Science degree in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. Lyons’ military career began in 1986 when he enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 1-195th Armor Battalion in Kearney.



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Holding The Colors: Lt. Col. Rick Gray holds the colors of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade shortly after taking command of the Nebraska Army National Guard organization, Aug. 16.

After earning his commission as a second lieutenant, Lyons went on to serve in numerous leadership positions throughout the Nebraska Army National Guard including stints as a scout platoon leader, cavalry troop commander, battalion commander at Camp Ashland’s 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) and as the commander of the 209th RTI. Lyons is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, serving in several leadership positions in Afghanistan in 2005 where he helped train members of the Afghan National Army at the Kabul Military Training Center in Kabul, Afghanistan. Lyons assumed command of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade in April 2014.

the assembled formation, adding that the success a total team effort between the brigade staff, the battalion commanders and the Soldiers of the organization. “I’m up here today because of you...because of your great success and your great ability to step forward and meet the challenges.” “I know you will do the same for Colonel Gray as he takes over,” Lyons said. Gray received his commission in October 1995 after serving for nine years as an enlisted infantryman within the Nebraska Army Guard’s 1-134th Infantry Detachment (Long Range Surveillance). After completing the armor officer basic course, Gray then attended initial entry rotary wing training where he

trained to become a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot. Following flight school, Gray was assigned as a platoon leader with the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance). During the course of his military career, Gray has served as a platoon leader, company commander and battalion commander. He is also a veteran of numerous overseas deployments including stints in Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation Joint Forge, Egypt in support of the Bright Star Exercise, Iraq as an operations officer assigned to the 110th Medical Battalion (Evacuation) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, El Salvador in support of Beyond the Horizons exercise, and as a company commander during a second mission to Iraq in support of OIF. Gray is a full-time member of the Nebraska Army National Guard where he serves as the state training and operations officer. Dahlman said he has complete confidence in Gray’s ability to build upon the work done by Lyons. “Your career up to this point has prepared you for command,” said Dahlman. “You have commanded before and I have no doubt you will do well.” “I charge you to take these Soldiers and continue to recognize their talents and achieve success,” Dahlman added. Gray said he is humbled by the opportunity that serving as commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance brings with it. “I take this privilege and responsibility of command very sincerely and I will not let you down,” Gray said. “I am deeply humbled and greatly appreciate your confidence.”

FORCE STRUCTURE continued from page 1.

Scottsbluff, and Chadron. The changes are the largest in Nebraska since a similar transformation of the 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) into the 67th Area Support Group in the mid-1990s. That transformation involved the transitioning of infantry, armor and artillery battalions into logistical and transportation units. The major changes to Nebraska Army National Guard units, which will occur over the course of roughly three years, currently include:

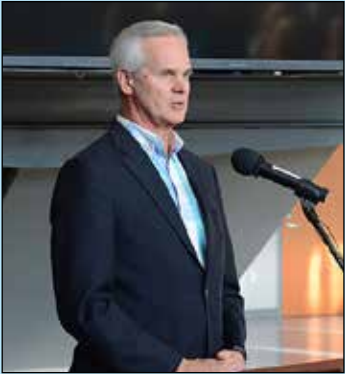
- The transition of the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade into the 67th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade;
- The addition of a new engineer battalion headquarters in Columbus;
- The replacement of the Kearney-based transportation battalion headquarters with a brigade support battalion headquarters;
- The transition of Kearney’s transportation company into distribution support and field maintenance companies;
- The transition of the transportation company in Chadron and Scottsbluff into a military police company. Scottsbluff will also see the addition of a new field maintenance company detachment;
- The transition of O’Neill’s chemical company detachment into a field maintenance company detachment;
- The addition of a new military police company detachment in Grand Island;
- The transition of York’s transportation company detachment into an engineer company detachment;
- The addition of a new Division Main Command Post Operational Detachment and a Military History Detachment in Lincoln;
- The deactivation of the Mead-based Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company with the remaining Rigger Soldiers reorganized into the 515th Rigger Support Team at the Mead Training Site;
- Some slight changes to the Lincoln, Hastings, Mead, and Beatrice-based 1-134th Cavalry Squadron with the addition of a new Cavalry Support Company in Lincoln;
- The transition of an engineer-

ing detachment and a brigade support company detachment in Hastings into a new Engineering Forward Support Company. According to Bohac, the force structure changes gave Nebraska the rare opportunity to look at the way it is currently stationed and reorganize itself to provide greater opportunities for Soldiers to receive training and promotion opportunities closer to home. “This realignment is an opportunity to provide our current Soldiers and those who are interested in joining our ranks better opportunities for personal and professional growth from the time they enlist until the time they retire without having to travel extensively from their hometown communities,” said Bohac. “This is particularly evident in the central and western areas of the state where for the last 20 years, Nebraskans who lived west of Kearney only had the opportunity to serve in our transportation companies.” “We’re excited about this,” Bohac said later. “This is a great change. This is a game-changer for Soldiers.” Following the realignment, new military police, field maintenance, and a distribution company will all be located in central and western Nebraska, as well as the remaining two transportation companies, giving Nebraskans living in these communities more choices than they ever had before. Bohac said the realignment will, in turn, dramatically enhance the Nebraska Army National Guard’s response readiness for state and national emergencies. “It’s good for the Soldiers and it’s good for the state,” he said. “We believe that this realignment will increase satisfaction within the Soldiers serving in these units, which will in turn improve our reenlistment rates as well as our capabilities and readiness.” No armory or readiness centers are expected to be closed by this announcement, although Bohac did say that the changes may affect the number of Soldiers stationed at each of the individual facilities slightly as units are realigned and Soldiers retrained for their new missions.



Photos by 1st Lt. Alex Salmon

Homecoming Ceremony: Staff Sgt. Mark Young, an engineer assistant with the 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, and his fiancé Andie Gaide, listen to speakers during a welcome home ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 19. The ceremony was held to officially welcome home 232 Nebraska Airmen from deployments that took them to various locations around the globe between July 2014 and August 2015.



On Behalf Of All Nebraskans: Nebraska Lt. Gov. Mike Foley speaks during a welcome home ceremony, Sept. 19.



Standing Tall: Airmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing stand to be recognized during a welcome home ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb., Sept. 19.

WELCOME continued from page 1.

Col. James “Bob” Stevenson, commander of the 155th ARW, said he was proud to lead such dedicated Airmen, adding that several of the 232 Airmen who were being honored were not in attendance because they were once again deployed.

Stevenson echoed Bohac in describing how busy the Nebraska Air National Guard has been. “These members have served 30 to 180 days across 16 time zones in the last year and represent 26 percent of the Wing – deployed in one year – and we’ve been doing it

for 14,” said Stevenson. “That’s how busy we have been and that’s how busy we will probably continue to be.” “Thank-you for your commitment, dedication and effort,” he added. “Welcome home, well done.”

STATE OF STATE continued from page 1.

organization in the next few years.

First, Dahlman acknowledged that Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter’s Army force structure plans to cut overall Army numbers will have an impact on Nebraska.

“We are a force provider to the fig Army,” he said. “Guard, Reserve and active Army are all legs of a stool and we are all pulling toward the same goal.”

Dahlman said the transition will leave the Nebraska Army Guard with a more efficient and well-balanced force structure that better reflects Nebraska and the demands of the Army. He added that the Nebraska National Guard as a whole is looking to the future and working hard toward creating a change-centric environment that better adapts to changes in the future—both on the military and civilian side.

“It’s going to be a challenge for all of us,” said Dahlman addressing the Army force structure plans for total Army reduction by 25,000, which means a reduction of 15,000 Army Guard Soldiers nationwide.

“We want to provide the best opportunity for our enlisted Soldiers and our general force, which may mean some armory changes and funding for new training for our military occupational specialty changes.” A good example of this, Dahlman said, would be going toward a maneuver enhancement brigade and it’s to Nebraska’s benefit to do that.

“More specifically, it provides Nebraska Soldiers enlistment-to-retirement career opportunities that take us further,” he said.

Dahlman said the Nebraska Army Guard will need time to work through the force restructuring process. But, he added, the organization can’t put everything on hold while working through these changes.

“We still need to be engaged with operational opportunities at the National Training Center” as well as mobilization opportunities, he said. “Our Soldiers joined the Guard to serve and be a part of something bigger than them. They want to serve in their military occupational specialty.”

Dahlman said he believes there will be plenty of opportunities for this due to the renewed fight with ISIS, which is not going away soon.

“In Nebraska we want to transition and we want to be part of the Army plan, but we need to be funded, we need to be relevant and we need to stay engaged within our community. We’ve been phenomenal at doing this at every point so far. Even before we call asking for assistance, our Soldiers and Airmen are calling us and asking what they can do to help out,” Dahlman said, citing examples of state and domestic natural disasters over the past several years.

“We expect some attrition because of the changes brought on by the force structuring,” said Dahlman. “If someone joined for a specific career field and it goes away, the Soldier has a choice to make. Our first goal is to keep that Soldier in his (or) her current (military occupational specialty) in their current armory.”

He said if that’s not possible there may be an opportunity for a promotion, but at the cost of a career change for the individual(s).

“For those who can’t make that sacrifice or don’t want to make that change, we respect that decision and appreciate their service, hard work and dedication. That’s where we’re going to get some attrition.”

The issues facing the Nebraska Army Guard are not unique for Nebraska, Dahlman said. He noted Nebraska has undergone similar changes three times in the past 20 years that resulted in changing the infantry brigade to the area support group and then to the battlefield surveillance brigade. “We are better poised than some of the other states because we have

experience.”

Another challenge facing Army Guard organizations across the 50 states and four territories is recruitment. Nebraska is no exception.

Dahlman said there are several reasons for this. As all the services down-ramp from Afghanistan and Iraq, they are looking to gain some efficiencies. So, while the active Army looks to make cuts across the board, it has put in place more stringent standards, cut waivers and in some cases terminated incentive programs such as signing bonuses.

These standards apply to the National Guard as well, even though they were not looking to cut numbers, which in turn makes it more difficult to get recruits. Probably the biggest reason for reduced interest in joining the Guard, said Dahlman, is the down years from the decade-long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“We have hundreds, if not thousands, of Soldiers who joined to be part of something bigger than themselves.”

The Nebraska Military Department, led by the Nebraska’s Maj. Gen. Daryl L. Bohac, is addressing the recruitment issue using both a top-down and bottom-up approaches said Dahlman.

The Nebraska National Guard hired Lt. Col. Vernon Chandler as its new recruiting and retention commander. Since being hired he has implemented a new state-of-the-art approach and changed nearly 50 percent of the recruiting force and increased the number of recruiters, said Dahlman.

“The folks we had were doing a great job, but it was time for a change. We needed vitality and energy in our organization and that’s what (Lieutenant Colonel) Chandler has done. He’s got new people, new scientific processes and programs in place and the leadership working in his direction.”

For the bottom-up approach, Chandler has challenged every Soldier to give him two leads on potential recruits.

Retention is also a concern of the Nebraska Army Guard and Dahlman said he partly faults an antiquated system as a reason for retaining young military talent. The Nebraska Army Guard needs to allow for some flexibility in drilling that wasn’t traditionally allowed before, he said.

“We need to allow for some flexibility to be Citizen Soldiers. That’s who we are. We’re Citizen Soldiers. We need to be sure to allow family and work as part of who we are. George Washington once said, ‘We assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen,’” said Dahlman. “That’s a big deal for Nebraska National Guard leadership. We in leadership get it. We are Citizen Soldiers. Once we stop getting it we’ve made a mistake.”

Looking forward into the future 20 years, Dahlman said he foresees the Nebraska Army Guard continuing to change as it has in the past.

“I would offer that the Nebraska Army National Guard, in concert with the Nebraska Air National Guard along with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency all together as the Nebraska Military Department, are on a path to more community engagement and a more comprehensive cooperation of where we are going,” he said.

He added the Nebraska Military Department faces significant challenges, but can learn from each other through collaborative efforts among services, emergency management and our communities.

Dahlman said the Nebraska National Guard is well positioned today in its next step for force structure.

“I don’t know exactly where the Nebraska Army National Guard is going to be in 20 years, but I know we are going to be better than we were in the last 20 years.”



1075th Medium Truck Company



209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute)



U.S. Property and Fiscal Office

Nebraska Army Guard logisticians honored during Pentagon ceremony

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Three Nebraska Army National Guard units were honored by the U.S. Army chief of staff, June 10, when they traveled to Washington, D.C., to accept national awards they earned while participating in the annual Combined Logistics Excellence Awards program.

The Nebraskans were joined with 36 other U.S. Army logistics units from 15 states and four overseas locations in the categories of Deployment Excellence, Supply Excellence and Maintenance Excellence. The recipients represented active, Guard and Reserve units.

Accepting awards in the Supply Excellence Awards program were representatives from the Camp Ashland-based 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) and the Lincoln-based United States Property and Fiscal Office. Earning the award in the Maintenance Excellence Awards division was the Columbus-based 1075th Medium Truck Company.

According to General Raymond Odierno, U.S. Army chief of staff, the work that logisticians do on a daily basis has made the Army what it is today.

“From the time that I was a lieutenant platoon leader, I learned early on that you cannot conduct a significant operation unless you have a strong logistical capability,” said Odierno, who presided over the morning ceremony at the Pentagon. “One of the great advantages that our Army has over every other army in the world is our ability

to do strategic, operational and tactical logistics... that provides us a capability that no other army in the world has.”

“Our ability to sustain ourselves over long periods of time, our ability to ensure that helicopters can fly hundreds and hundreds of thousands of hours in the worst environments, our ability to sustain our systems at high operational rates, our ability to deploy our forces no-notice on several continents simultaneously, our ability to ensure that our Soldiers can sustain themselves personally so that they can do their missions... no one else can do that,” Odierno said. “That’s what makes us an outstanding force.”

The fact that Nebraska had several units honored this year really isn’t much of a surprise. Nebraska Army National Guard units have done quite well, especially within the Supply Excellence Awards division, for many. In fact, both the 209th RTI and USP&FO have numerous titles hanging on their walls. It’s all about developing a culture of excellence that has carried on and increased throughout the Nebraska Army National Guard, say state logistics officials.

Still, winning a championship is always pretty sweet. Especially when it’s your first.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Waylon Petsche, maintenance technician for the 1075th Truck Company which earned a first-place award for the first time this year after finishing second in the National Guard Bureau’s Maintenance Excellence category in 2011, his team of 15 maintainers worked extremely hard to get themselves to this point. He added that the team of national evaluators looked at everything the unit maintainers

do, ranging from facility maintenance and drivers licensing to maintenance operations and its adherence to the various regulatory guidances that govern Army maintenance operations.

In order to prepare for the evaluations, Petsche said his team spent a significant amount of time researching various things that might come up. “(It’s) like piecing a puzzle,” he added. “When you go off a checklist, there are items that you need to keep track of from the unit activities; getting all of the data that the unit did throughout the year, even community involvement.”

By the time the evaluators arrived, Petsche said his team was ready.

“We showed everything as is, no wool over the eyes” said Petsche. “We didn’t hide anything.”

“(The evaluators) pointed out areas to improve and the evaluators took ideas from our unit as well,” he added. “I also think having the support from the state and the command team – from the 734th (Transportation Battalion), 92nd (Troop Command) and the (State Logistics Office) was influential as well, especially during the (Department of the Army) evaluation.”

Still, winning a national championship – in this case in the Army National Guard’s Medium Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) category – was pretty significant, Petsche said.

“The AAME program was a great experience and I was shocked to hear that our unit won,” he said. “A lot of team effort went into the 1075th winning the inspection, so it was great to see the unit win.”

‘State of State’ opens communication lines

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard overcame many challenges and accomplished much in 2015, according Brig. Gen. Richard Dahlman, Nebraska Army National Guard assistant adjutant general, who delivered the Nebraska Army National Guard “State of the State” briefing to the director of the Army National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. Timothy J. Kadavy, at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Virginia, Sept. 22.

The Guard’s “State of the State” address is an opportunity for the each state and territory Guard to bring its top brass to the National Guard Bureau and give the director of the Army or Air National Guard and his/her team a snapshot of how a state is doing things. It’s structured to identify the top three issues among the many different directorates, which enables a collective conversation.

“This structure enables a collective conversation verses just General Kadavy and I talking,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl L. Bohac, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general. “It allows the teams at the state and bureau level to talk, which is

really a good thing.”

Dahlman echoed those remarks, saying it is the one time annually that the Nebraska Guard gets to showcase the challenges it is facing and address Nebraska issues at a national level.

“The face-to-face time we get here is extremely valuable,” Dahlman said. “Many times we experience something in the field that they don’t see at the National Guard Bureau. If they (Bureau) are ignoring an issue, it may not be intentional.”

“When we identify a Nebraska problem, it most likely a problem experienced across the Guards,” Dahlman added. “By coming to the Bureau and airing our dirty laundry, we generally discover that we are not unique to a specific set of problems. This provides us some comfort that perhaps the systems in place are not giving us the tools we need and allows the Bureau to see the big picture so they can address the problem.”

Nebraska’s “State of the State” delegation involves representatives from across every level of the state-level staff—personnel, logistics, fiscal, operations, and domestic operations, Dahlman said.

“Bringing the entire team allows

us to gain synergy and a positive force of momentum—something you don’t get individually,” he said.

During the one-hour address, Dahlman highlighted the Nebraska Army Guard’s major accomplishments. Included was Nebraska’s Emergency Management Agency’s state active duty tornado and flood support, the Army Guard missions in the Middle East and three top awards at the 2015 Combined Logistics Excellence Awards.

Dahlman also talked about some of the challenges facing the Nebraska Army National Guard. He cautioned about the inevitable changes for Nebraska when Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter’s Army force structure plans come to fruition.

“The Nebraska Army Guard is about to go through a period of transition that we have went through before,” said Dahlman.

“We are experienced in change and that experience is posed for us to do good things. The transition required by force structuring of the Army will leave the state of the Nebraska Army National Guard with a more efficient and more balanced force structure that speaks to the diversity of Nebraska and the demands of the Army.”

Feet First: Aircrew from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing and 170th Operations Support Squadron plunge into Branched Oak Lake and swim to 20-man life rafts, where they will await rescue by a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter during a survival exercise, June 6. The aircrew members enhanced survival skills on land and water with hands-on training.



Photos by Senior Airman Marshall Mauer

Up They Go: A Nebraska Air National Guard flight crew member is hoisted from Branched Oak Lake toward a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, June 6, during a survival training exercise.



Keeping A Low Profile: Lt. Col. Katie Millwood, a pilot with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing, fends off mosquitos and opposition forces by conducting point-to-point navigation through the woods during a survival exercise at Branched Oak Lake, June 6.

By land or sea, Nebraska Guard Airmen sharpen survival skills

By Senior Airmen Marshall Mauer
Staff Photojournalist

On a muggy June 6, roughly 140 Airmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing and 170th Operations Support Squadron joined the “gilled and furry inhabitants” of Nebraska’s Branched Oak Lake for combat and water survival training.

It is wet, it is muddy—it is instruction that could someday prove life-saving.

The murky water, 1,800 acres in diameter, and the heftiest of the Salt Valley Lakes, is home to catfish and walleye, while bobcats and white-tail deer reside in the surrounding deciduous woods. Areas like these, as part of the Great Plains, are replicated across the globe—from Kazakhstan and Hungary to Ukraine and Siberia.

On this day, shades of green and brown gave in to plumes of lime-colored sea dye, the smoke of red signaling flares, and two dark green and black Nebraska Army National UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.

The Airmen, many of whom are assigned to KC-135R Stratotankers, split off into six groups in the early morning haze. Of the groups, one of mostly boom operators and pilots gathered around a Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape instructor on one knee, who conducted a class on point-to-point land navigation using a GPS radio and a map.

With soggy boots, a second group plodded through damp foliage on their way to a mock-extraction site. Once there, some Airmen searched for dry branches while others built a shelter and fire with limited supplies. 1st Lt. Erika Wilson, KC-135R pilot, was one of those fire starters.

“What stood out the most was evading through the woods, starting the fire and building shelters,” said Wilson. “That’s always the fun part of the combat side.”

But it wasn’t just fun and games, said Wilson. “It’s valuable information. It’s a three-year training event for us and it’s been a while for me. I used to train on the other side, so being on this side and now (as an

aircrew member), it’s always good.”

A third group stayed dry, for the time being, inside the park’s central lodge as the team watched a survival skills classroom presentation.

In a grassy field close by, a fourth group met with Staff Sgt. Corey Brown, aircrew flight equipment instructor, to rehash flagging in rescue aircraft with vectoring flares.

“Basically, I’m teaching them how to read a compass and give a heading to that aircraft so they can fly over them, get visual on those members and hoist them off the ground to safety,” said Brown.

Brown’s job is a lot easier, he said, when the enthusiasm on his students’ faces is evident.

“The enjoyment that they seem to be getting out of it (is great). There’s a lot of training and most of it is ‘death by PowerPoint’ so I think they enjoy this interactive part of it,” he said. “They have a really good time with it, so that’s really encouraging for us (as instructors).”

Once one stage of training ended, the groups rotated to other scenarios.

As the morning drizzle and clouds of mosquitos gave way to a warm breeze, Airmen in flight suits geared up with bright orange LPU-2/P life preservers.

Nearby, personnel from Lincoln West Optimist Club, Nebraska Game and Parks, and Malcolm Fire and Rescue readied their teams as well. Split into two elements, the Airmen walked single-file down a dock before jumping into the brown Branched Oak Lake, and swam 100 yards toward three bobbing 20-man life rafts. The rafts are the same as those found in many aircraft.

One of the groups, upon reaching a raft, found some shade after deploying the raft’s highly-visible neon-pink canopy. Such a canopy can help diminish the dangers of heat exhaustion, sunstroke, and deadly dehydration for stranded aircrew members.

On a nearby hill overlooking the lake, the Blackhawk crews prepped their helicopters and took off in search of the stranded Airmen. As the helicopter approached the water, the pilots spotted the bright orange life preserv-



Preparing To Get Wet: Maj. Brian Scholtes, a Nebraska Air National Guard pilot, inflates his life preserver during an aircraft crash survival exercise at Branched Oak Lake, Neb., June 6. The day-long exercise was designed to prepare Nebraska Airmen for a variety of survival scenarios.

ers of two Airmen linking arms twenty yards from the life raft.

One of the Airmen waved frantically and the helicopter crewman began lowering the hoist, nicknamed the Forest Penetrator. As the anchor-shaped hoist dropped closer toward his position in the water, Tech. Sgt. Carson Pollard, 155th ARW aircrew flight equipment specialist, readied himself for lift-off.

“That was my first time getting hoisted up,” said Pollard, a former Marine crew chief on the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter. “I always ended up hoisting people, but never got hoisted. (It was) really cool. Having this different perspective was awesome—made my heart rate go through the roof.”

Master Sgt. Nathan Schmaderer, 155th ARW aircrew flight equipment superintendent, said he believes these exercises teach useful skills that will hopefully never be needed as part of the participants’ Air Force careers. Still, Schmaderer, the exercise’s coordinator, is confident in the training benefits.

“The Airmen are actually out here, learning equipment hands-on, so it’s a good vibe. A lot of them are part-time aircrew—they need

to get specific training in a short amount of time so they can get on to other stuff,” said Schmaderer.

“That’s what we provide on this weekend for them. So they’re more than happy to come out here and do this. Most of them have a good attitude about it so that helps. It’s also a lot of fun,” he added.

The exercise’s benefits weren’t limited to the 81 aircrew members either, said Schmaderer. Also included were representatives from the 170th Group AFE shop, from the 55th Wing SERE team, and multiple 155th ARW sections including the fire department, security forces, public affairs and the communications flight.

“The (communications) guys come out, set up their antennas, and they’ll do communications with the helicopters as well as with us on the ground,” he said.

Because the training is condensed into one day, the efficiency of the exercises makes it more time-efficient for aircrew members, many of whom must stay up-to-date on myriad training requirements. Whether it’s the skills taught or their efficient mode of delivery, mission readiness is enhanced.

Annual Training

❖ Twenty-Fifteen ❖

Annual training has long been the capstone event for Nebraska National Guard units’ yearly training plan, during which Soldiers and Airmen receive valuable training designed to prepare them to operate in wide variety of locations and missions. ❖ 2015 was no different as Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen dispersed wide and far — and in some cases overseas — to conduct their annual training exercises. ❖ These exercises form the basis for the roles that Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen may play when deployed for a state or federal mission. ❖ The following pages are some of the many stories that occurred this year as Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen practiced their missions, refined their skills and recorded significant accomplishments during Annual Training 2015.

Nebraska brigade focuses on war-time readiness

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

More than 650 Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade descended upon the upper midwestern’s Camp Ripley, Minnesota, for the Exportable Combat Training Capability training exercise, June 16-29.

The entire training exercise involved approximately 1,000 Soldiers who came from a variety of different organizations including the Nebraska National Guard, California National Guard, Wisconsin National Guard, Minnesota National Guard and a unit from the Army Reserve.

According to the Lincoln-based brigade commander, Col. Kevin Lyons, the XCTC exercise was designed to accomplish some major goals, all of which will help the units and the overall organization prepare for potential future mobilizations.

XCTC is an Army National Guard field training exercise designed to certify platoon proficiency in coordination with the First Army. In addition, XCTC reduces post-mobilization training time and thus increases the units’ availability to support combatant commanders.

“It’s an opportunity for all brigade elements to come together and do their duty military occupational specialties and be evaluated by external evaluators, which in our case is the 189th (Infantry Brigade) out of Fort Lewis, Washington,” said Lyons. “Primarily it gives our Soldiers an opportunity to be evaluated on their MOSs at the troop level, platoon level and battalion size level.”



Eyes On Target: Two members of the 234th Signal Company look at the training grounds of Camp Ripley, Minn., during the unit's annual training, June 24. The unit's annual training was part of the Exportable Combat Training Capability, a field training exercise designed to certify platoon proficiency.

From almost any measure, the exercise was huge. Nebraska Army National Guard units from the 67th BfSB involved in the training included the 234th Signal Company, 1167th Brigade Support Company, 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne), 165th Quartermaster Detachment, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron

(Reconnaissance and Surveillance), and the 1-376th Aviation Battalion.

“From Nebraska we have approximately 820 Soldiers,” said Lyons. “Of which 103 of those Soldiers are from the 1074th Transportation Company, which falls under 92nd Troop Command, however they are out here to do their annual training and then they

provide a service by helping us haul some of our vehicles back to Nebraska once we complete our annual training.”

According to the Lyons, the Soldiers were spread out throughout Camp Ripley which provides great training opportunities.

For example, on the cantonment area, there were roughly 420 Soldiers, while at the Yankee 2 training area, more than 300 Soldiers operating. Finally, the Yankee 4 training area involved more than 320 Soldiers.

“It is quite an operation and covers a lot of ground,” added Lyons. “The unique thing about our ability to train and do our mission is we are working around the 1-34th Brigade as they do live fire exercises on tank tables on the main range.”

According to Lyons, the annual training exercise was one for the books.

“This by far is the most rewarding annual training I have ever been a part of,” said Lyons. “To be able to see 1,003 Soldiers do their jobs, do their missions and do it well” is extremely satisfying.

According to the Soldiers involved, they liked how the exercise was designed. That’s particularly true for the organization’s younger troops, who enjoyed the fact that the training gave them an opportunity to see what it would be like to go into a village and conduct a reconnaissance mission, said Staff Sgt. Mike Belleci, a member of Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry. Belleci added that it was also beneficial for the Soldiers to conduct an operation without knowing how the opposing forces would react, versus what sometimes occurs when the opposing force is made up of Soldiers from a familiar unit.

See XCTC on 8.



Heads Up Training: Pfc. Cody Johnson, a member of the 234th Signal Company's re-transmission team, adjusts an antenna during Exportable Combat Training Capability program, a field training exercise that took place at Camp Ripley, Minn., June 24.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Nebraska Signal Soldiers keep communication flowing for 1,000 troops during annual training

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

Twenty-nine Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Lincoln-based 234th Signal Company found themselves extremely busy when they were charged with providing communication support for approximately 1,000 Soldiers from the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade during the Exportable Combat Training Capacity training exercise, June 16-29, at Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

Exportable Combat Training Capacity, or otherwise known as XCTC, is an Army National Guard field training exercise designed to certify platoon proficiency in coordination with the First Army.

Throughout XCTC the Nebraska Army National Guard signal Soldiers were responsible for developing, testing, providing and managing communication and information system support for their fellow Soldiers training

in Minnesota. It’s a huge job, say members of the unit.

“We are providing six footprints with our 29 Soldiers,” said Capt. Ryan Carlson, commander of the 234th SC.

“So, we are very busy, both on the tactical data side with the warrior information network tactical, and then on the field manual side with the (single channel ground and airborne radio system) radios and providing retransmission,” he added.

In order to accomplish its important mission, the unit constantly worked to ensure everyone could communicate throughout Camp Ripley. That’s particularly daunting considering that members of the 67th BfSB, a Nebraska Army National Guard brigade based in Lincoln, were training throughout Camp Ripley, from the cantonment to the field training areas.

“It’s a big work load and it seems daunting at times,” said Carlson. “But we have a ton of experts and a lot of experience. And these Sol-

diers’ work ethic is unmatched.”

According to Carlson he couldn’t be more proud of how his team of Soldiers performed.

“I’m really proud of these Soldiers of what they have done and what they have been able to accomplish over a short period of time,” said Carlson.

According to the Nebraska signal Soldiers, keeping the brigade’s communication channels working is extremely important, especially considering that the basic success of the whole XCTC training exercise was reliant upon the 67th BfSB’s ability to communicate to its various entities.

“(The brigade) is definitely dependent on us,” said Sgt. Corey Handley, a multichannel transmission systems operator-maintainer with the 234th Sig. Co. “It’s a good feeling when you have everything going right.”

According to the 234th Soldiers, they couldn’t do their job without the teamwork ethic that has devel-

See SIGNALS on 8.

Guardsmen refine support skills in Minnesota

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Staff Photojournalist

Teamwork is more than just a good idea for the members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1167th Brigade Support Company out of Mead, Nebraska. It is a necessary way of Army life.

During their June 16-29 annual training at Camp Ripley, Minnesota, Soldiers from the 1167th BSC worked hard to provide logistic support to the entire 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, said Maj. Edwin Davis, 1167th BSC commander.

According to Davis, this logistical support mission included food service, maintenance support, water purification and distribution, supply support and distribution of supplies, vehicle recovery support and fuel supply.

"Training for the Soldiers has been just phenomenal," said Davis. "The fact that we are truly able to do our job, support the brigade, give them the fuel, the water, the maintenance, the food, everything that they need so they can have sustained operations and continue on the battlefield" has made the exercise successful.

In order to do this, say the Soldiers involved, each section within the 1167th BSC had to work together as a team to make the entire annual training go smoothly.

"My Soldiers are great," said Sgt. Austin Kucera, an automated logistical specialist with the 1167th BSC. "It's because of their hard work that we did so well down here with the very minimum of mistakes throughout the whole AT. They've worked very hard. (I) couldn't have done it without them."

For most Army National Guard Soldiers, annual training is typically a time to run simulated missions and practice in more depth those skills that they review back home during their monthly drills. For the various sections in the 1167th BSC, their annual training was spent actually doing the job they were trained for.

For example, one of the sections working hard to make annual training a success for every Soldier involved in the 67th BfSB's Exportable Combat Training Capability exercise were the 1167th BSC's water treatment specialists. By drawing water from Ferrell Lake and sending it through their Light Weight Water Purification Systems – otherwise known as LWP's – the unit Soldiers were able to provide 100 percent water sustainment for



Keeping The Vehicles Rolling: Pfc. Cole Jones, 1167th Brigade Support Company, conducts a preventative maintenance check on a Humvee in preparation for the next day's missions.

Y2, a training area on Camp Ripley where some of the members of the 67th BfSB were based.

That's something that the Soldiers rarely get to do during drills in Mead. For example the Soldiers don't get to pump water because there is no place to release the water containing the chemical waste, or gray water, said Spc. Nicole Havlovic, a water treatment specialist with the 1167th.

"We purify it," said Havlovic. "We test it to make sure it's safe. And it's pretty exciting to know that everyone is drinking our water."

The section used a 2,000 gallon portable water source tank truck called a Hippo to transport the water from the purification site to the various groups that needed it, said Spc. David Taylor, a water treatment specialist with the 1167th BSC.

Other Soldiers working hard to make annual training a success was the 1167th BSC's mechanics. As vehicles rolled in, the Nebraska Soldiers conducted Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services checks, or PMCS, on each.

"(We are) working on vehicles," said Pfc. Cole Jones. "That's what we do. That's our main job, whether it's in Lincoln or at A.T. We get a fault that comes in. We do our best to correct that fault."

As a hands-on learner, Pfc. Tyler Joseph, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with 1167th BSC, said he enjoyed his annual training at Camp Ripley where he worked with vehicle control for parts and his fellow



Photos by Spc. Anna Pongo

Clean Water: Spc. David Taylor and Spc. Nicole Havlovic, water treatment specialists with the 1167th Brigade Support Company, test purified water drawn from Ferrell Lake to make sure it is safe to drink. After the purification process is finished, the water is then transported to various groups who need it.

mechanics to annotate what's wrong with each vehicle and then fix it.

But that wasn't the only thing that the unit accomplished during annual training. Far from it, in fact.

Along with supporting the 67th BfSB, the company also was able to conduct some important training that was different than what the unit normally does at their home station.

While training at Camp Ripley, the 1167th BSC was able to run two situational training exercise lanes, or STX lanes. One was a tactical convoy recovery lane and the other was a tactical convoy lane.

That type of training was an unusual opportunity for the unit Soldiers, who typically don't conduct practice missions where they have opposing forces, improvised explosive device simulators, as well as direct and indirect fire engagements.

In preparation for these STX lanes, the unit spent a couple of months pre-training on how to establish a security escort, said Davis.

It's "not a typical mission for the brigade support company, but Soldiers who were put on that team were able to work on their tactics and training and get multiple iterations of going through those lanes," said Davis.



Keeping Track: Sgt. Tyler Holton, 1167th Brigade Support Company, checks the gauges on a fuel servicing truck during annual training at Camp Ripley, Minn. Holton's section was responsible for fueling numerous vehicles each day in support of the 1167th BSC's annual training activities.

The Soldiers used the opportunity to become more tactically proficient in the event that they would be needed to support a convoy, a recovery lane, or a quick reaction force mission, said Davis.

Jones, a wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 1167th BSC, was one of the Soldiers who had the opportunity to go through the STX lanes. Jones said he spent his time pulling security as a gunner on a

Humvee for recovery missions for the military intelligence team.

"Just because your MOS may be vehicle mechanic or cook, that doesn't mean that's all you do," said Jones. "You could be pulled to do numerous different things. I feel that you should have a wide variety of experiences because the more experiences you have, the better you can help out your team to complete the mission."

XCTC continued from page 7.

Probably the biggest benefit, however, was the fact that the Soldiers had to operate within the brigade structure, knowing that what they were doing would contribute to the 67th BfSB's overall operations.

"This is beneficial to the unit because we get to work together as a brigade," said Belleci. "So, we can work with all the assets like military intelligence, field observers and the fire support. It gives us opportunity to work in something other than a troop."

Throughout the training, the Soldiers received real time feedback on their operations, techniques and skills.

"The 189th (Infantry Brigade) provided external evaluation on our Soldiers so we can get great feedback and continue to develop our skills," said Lyons.

According to the 67th BfSB staff, the training was outstanding and the trainers brought a wealth of knowledge to the training. "This training is primarily for what the Soldiers jobs are," said Lyons. "They are doing their jobs out here."

"They are able to take the feedback from the evaluators and rerun the lanes," said Lyons. "There is opportunity to rerun the lanes up to four or five times."

"This by far is the most rewarding annual training I have ever been a part of."

— Col. Kevin Lyons
67th Battlefield Surveillance
Brigade commander

In addition to obtaining platoon proficiency, the command staff left the training with information and data that they can use throughout the year at drills.

The pace of the training exercise was similar to the pace of combat operations so Soldiers can be prepared and ready for deployments. Essentially, said Lyons, the training helps the brigade prepare to go to war.

Everyone came together as a team and received good training and experience from the exercise.

"The training was a great opportunity," said Lyons. "Hopefully for the brigade moving forward we have opportunities like this sooner rather than later."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

Communications Check: A signal support specialist with the 234th Signal Company checks to make sure the unit's communication lines are working during annual training at Camp Ripley, Minn., June 23.

SIGNALS continued from page 7.

oped throughout the unit.

"I think having a lot of teamwork in our different sections helps a lot and is definitely an asset," said Hanley.

The Soldiers said they are also pleased with the work they provided throughout the exercise as well, adding that it shows the value of the training they conducted throughout the year.

"We do practical training every month, but doing your jobs here, we get to see our real affect on everything," said Spc. Bryce Fowler, a signal support systems specialist with the 234th SC. "And (we get to) see how well and capable we are at doing our jobs, like setting up (our equipment) in a timely fashion."

And, according to Hanley, the feedback they received from the

brigade was great, adding that the praise the unit Soldiers received made them feel especially confident in the abilities they've developed thus far.

That, in turn, should equate to an even more effective unit in the future... a future that will undoubtedly rest in great part on the communications lessons learned in Minnesota.

Working Together: Spc. Abdoulaziz Amadou and Pfc. Brent Hellbusch work with other members of the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) to accomplish a task during tactical training at Fort Riley, Kan. The members of the Lincoln-based unit were challenged with conducting a wide variety of medical- and Soldier-based training tasks during this year's July 13-31 annual training.



Photo Courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Lillie Chambers

Medics use Fort Riley exercises to cap off busy training year

By Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes
State Public Affairs Officer

Annual Training 2015 was a tale of two cities for members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance). First, the Guard medics spent the initial week of their July 17-31 annual training at Fort Riley, Kan., conducting platoon and squad-level training at the installation's Combined Arms Collective Training Facility where, among many things, they focused on Army Warrior Skills and Military Occupational Specialty training at the half-mile long "Victory Village."

That was followed by a week of training that focused on individual medic MOS certification assessments at Fort Riley's state-of-the-art Medical Simulation Training Center.

According to Capt. Mathew Field, unit commander, the goal was to put the Soldiers through a rigorous set of training scenarios that would strengthen them both as individual medics and as collective teams and platoons.

"If you're a tenured Soldier, you might chuckle if I said this was an arduous annual training," said Field, "but for some of these younger (Soldiers,) it was... it stressed them."

"I was most impressed with how they learned and how they learned quickly," said Field, adding that along with the various exercise scenarios, the Soldiers also had to



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Realistic Training: Pfc. Christian Magilton, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), checks on a 'casualty' at the Medical Simulation Center, July 28. The computerized mannequin is designed to test a medic's ability to provide trauma assessments in a combat environment.

learn how to deal effectively with the humidity and heat while conducting physically and mentally taxing training. "It really does strengthen your trust in the training models that we use here."

Field said this year's AT was the culmination of a year-long training plan that took advantage of the significant training capabilities at Fort Riley. "Whether here or at Fort Riley, we really needed that chance to go off as a company together and focus on team cohesion," he said.

For example, "Victory Village," is a half-mile-long simulated town that includes a variety of capabilities including explosions and video cameras that record a platoon and squad's every move.

"It's just a great training resource," he said, adding the video system enabled the unit's leaders to carefully assess the Soldiers collectively. "When you watch a platoon struggle during the crawl (phase) and then dominate in the run (phase), and from that start to finish you can quantitatively and qualitatively note those differences and you can point them out, that's a great resource," said Field.

That was particularly evident during the convoy and urban operations training, he said. According to Field, he was able to show platoons "how ate up they were" the first time they conducted an operation and then how they improved by the time they conducted their last mission. "That was very, very important."

Following the first week, Field said the unit's focus turned toward ensuring that the individual medics were prepared for their certification assessments.

Aiding in this effort was Fort Riley's Medical Simulation Center, which gives medical Soldiers the opportunity to work in a simulated combat environment on a fully functioning "casualty" that actually reacts – both positively and negatively – to a medic's treatment.

According to Pfc. Lizzette Jimenez, a 313th Med. Co. medic who normally works as a bank



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Final Assessment: Pfc. Lizzette Jimenez, a medic with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), re-packs her equipment after training at Fort Riley's Medical Simulation Center.

teller in Omaha, the simulation center was an amazing experience.

"It's supposed to help us critically think," said Jimenez shortly after she faced the daunting challenge of treating a casualty that had both a leg amputated by an improvised explosive device and a gunshot wound to the chest under near-dark conditions. She said the pressure to do well was particularly acute.

"Really, you just want to do it right the first time," she said. "So, I feel like it's self-pressure. You second-guess yourself."

"You have to stay calm, otherwise you're going to fail," Jimenez added.

Pfc. Christian Magilton agreed.

"It's exciting. It's good to brush up on stuff," he said, adding that he, also, felt the pressure to do well. "They throw a lot of stuff at you. It's routine stuff, but when the lights go off and the casualty actually reacts

to you, that's a little different."

"It's really good training," Magilton said.

He wasn't the only one raving about the experience, either.

"It's been awesome training," said Sgt. Evan Raymond. "We're getting a lot of experience as far as getting our adrenaline up there in simulated combat to what it's like... these mannequins help us stay on our toes."

Overall, Field said he was greatly pleased by the training, adding that it enabled he and other unit leaders to identify the company's top medic and create a pool of Soldiers ready to test for their expert field medical badges.

"We (lasered) in on those who showed the greatest aptitude as potentials for the expert field medical badge," he said, adding that it will additionally help prepare the unit for whatever challenges it might face in the near and distant future.

Forward support Soldiers practice their trades in Minnesota forests

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Staff Photojournalist

Hard work is something every member of the Army understands and knows personally. This is especially true for Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 195th Forward Support Company.

That hard work ethic was definitely on display when Soldiers from the Omaha-based 195th FSC put their knowledge of logistical support to the test during their June 16-17 annual training at Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

While at Camp Ripley, the 195th FSC Soldiers were responsible for conducting a number of support operations planned in conjunction with Camp Ripley. This included creating a drainage system to keep water from pooling next to one of Camp Ripley's buildings, propping up old concrete sidewalks and pouring new ones, laying concertina wire, and building a 460-square-foot plywood floor for one of Camp Ripley's maintenance buildings so that those Soldiers working on trucks didn't have to lie in the dirt.

According to unit members, the ability to actually provide concrete support to a training exercise is something that keeps the unit Soldiers' engaged and willing to go



Photo by Spc. Anna Pongo

Fresh Water: Members of the 195th Forward Support Company work on their water purification system during the unit's annual training, June 24 at Camp Ripley, Minn. They turned lake water into shower water.

the extra mile.

"I haven't had to tell any of them to work," said Sgt. 1st Class Sean McMahon, adding that his Soldiers were extremely motivated to get the job done and done right.

"We take pride in what we do and, honestly, it's a chance to show

off because everyone else does training, (but) there's not a product that people can see when they're done," said Sgt. Mike Schutte.

"There is a lot of room for pride in your work here, because you make something and it's there forever," said Schutte. "So you want to do a good job on it."

Besides that, the Camp Ripley exercise was an opportunity to get out and complete some major projects and focus on military occupational specialty development.

"I love my job because it gets me out of the office and lets me play with big toys," said Spc. Ashton Henderson, an interior electrician with the 195th. "When I'm at home, I work for recruiting and retention... pretty much office work. So, when I get out here, it gets me out in the field. It also gets me a nice tan and lets me work my MOS."

Additionally, the work conducted at Camp Ripley enabled the members of the 195th FSC to work on their bigger mission: providing logistical support to the 528th Sustainment Brigade out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This included everything from water purification and fixing the electricity in the chow hall to building showers and hauling food supplies.

"Basically anything to make their life easier," said McMahon.



Photo by Spc. Anna Pongo

Up, Up and Away!

A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter practices hoisting Soldiers during a training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn. For most of the Soldiers that were hoisted, it was their first time to ever be a part of training like this.



Gear'in up: Staff Sgt. Sara Stoltenberg, a member of the Nebraska National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), suits up into her gear before her rotation into the 'hot zone' during the Patriot 15 exercise at Volk Field, Wisc.

Coming to Help: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) search of a contamination during the Patriot 15 exercise at Volk Field, Wisc., July 22.



Helping Out: A Soldier from the Nebraska Army National Guard's 754th Chemical Company (Reconnaissance/Decontamination) cuts away the shirt of a role-playing casualty during the Patriot Exercise 2015, a training exercise designed to turn training into habit.

Guardsmen practice disaster response skills

By Staff Sgt. Koan Nissen
Staff Photojournalist

Natural and man-made disasters are an unfortunate and sometimes deadly part of life, but National Guard forces stand at the ready to help mitigate the loss of life and property—ready to live up to their motto: ‘Always Ready, Always There.’

A specialized Nebraska unit and its military and civilian partners from around the county gathered in the heart of the Badger State to help sharpen their rescue skills when the Nebraska National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package, or CERFP, participated in Patriot 15 exercise at Volk Field, Wisconsin, July 20-24.

“Patriot exercise is a national event managed through Guard Bureau, but it gets play from a lot of different entities around the country,” said Lt. Col. Tom Mortimer, 126th Chemical Battalion commander who also command's the Nebraska CERFP. This was particularly evident at Patriot 15 where around 30 states were represented during the exercise.

According to Nebraska officials, domestic operations exercises, like Patriot 15, as in real-world incidents, involve many different military and civilians authorities. “It’s a collection of Air and Army National Guard; as well as, a lot of civilian players,” said Mortimer. “You have NGOs (non governmental organizations), Red Cross, Salvation Army, not to mention local law enforcement and local fire. It’s very well supported...”

In Patriot 15, the responding services were working in varying, but specific, environments under controlled and well-planned scenarios. “Nebraska is here as a contingency response element. We’re here based on a specific hazard. In this case it’s a derecho, which is a high-wind environment, that’s caused damage on a local level,” said Mortimer. “Each day is a different setup. Each day is a theoretical different community with slightly different problem set, but we’re here to mitigate the loss of life. We do that through a search and extraction team.”

One particular area of the Wisconsin exercise allowed Soldiers and Airmen to navigate simulated damaged or collapsed structures. The Regional All-Climate Training Center, or REACT, provided emergency responders with several simulated disaster areas in a controlled environment.

“In each building environment



Battle Buddy Team: A member of the 623rd Engineering Company waits for team members to come help in the assistance of moving ‘casualties’ during the Patriot 15 exercise at Volk Field, Wisc. Patriot 15 was a national event managed by National Guard Bureau in which different military and civilian authorities come together.

you have all kinds of hazards that are common to everyday. But, those hazards when they’re not contained, and we’re not living around them the way we’re supposed to be living around them, they can cause sickness and illness that ranges in varying degrees of impact to people that were trapped in that rubble,” said Mortimer.

“So, for our search and extraction folks, this is a real opportunity for them to go into a collapsed structure and have to extract people through the use of bridging and blocking; and bracing and supporting, a structure so that they can safely go in and safely extract people,” he said.

Mortimer’s CERFP team is comprised of many different skill sets under varying degrees of leadership. For him, Patriot offers his subordinate leadership an opportunity to challenge themselves and their people.

“For the leadership of each of my elements, and my elements include a search and extraction, a decontamination, a medical and a fatality search and recovery team—from the Iowa Air National Guard, (and) other elements... from the Nebraska Army National Guard and Air National Guard, they each have a leadership team in place. And, these exercises allow that leadership to practice its leadership skills,” he said.

One of those first-line leaders is Staff Sgt. Laura Zietz. Zietz, a squad leader with the 754th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company, was working in the casualty collection point, or CCP, during Patriot 15.

“We make sure we have a count of the walking victims as well as the non-walking victims,” said Zietz. Zietz said training in a different

environment helped her and her group think beyond the common constraints she experiences training at home in Nebraska.

“It’s really nice to have a different place. Going somewhere new, we have different obstacles,” said Zietz. “Specifically, up on the CCP, I couldn’t use stakes. So we had to figure it out. We used chairs and water buckets to hold everything down instead.”

Regardless of how well the Soldiers practice with inanimate objects and dummies, adding actors, who play the part of injured or lost, creates just the right amount of realism for the training.

“I’m here to help the Soldiers get some practice in and get used to seeing stuff like this (casualty simulation),” said Morgan Bilgrien, a 19-year-old volunteer trauma patient from Madison, Wisconsin. “It’s not real, but we treat it like a real situation.”

Bilgrien was accompanied by her friend, Jennifer Menard, a 19-year-old EMT from Austin, Wisconsin. Both work in the medical field and bring an element of ‘realness’ to the table. Bilgrien and Menard, who are return volunteers, were made up to look as if they suffered various degrees of superficial and internal trauma.

“I’ve been to mass casualty incidents, and I know how hectic it can be,” said Menard. “It’s good to have this training.”

Exercises such as Patriot 15 are large and complex. However, in an age where everything is larger and more complex, it’s good to know the National Guard is always ready to train above and beyond for the inevitable next disaster—wherever it may be.

Cavalry Soldiers use annual training to simulate wartime environments

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Staff Photojournalist

Members of the 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) had a chance to brush up on their combat skills this summer when they participated in the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's June 16-27 eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise at Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

The training consisted of an exportable combat training program for brigade elements to do their duty and be evaluated by external evaluators, said Col. Kevin Lyons, the commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

“It gives our soldiers the chance to be evaluated on their MOS on

the troop level, platoon level, and battalion sized level,” said Lyons.

A total of 1,003 Soldiers participated in the training with approximately 820 from Nebraska units.

Much of the training that the 1-134th Cavalry Soldiers participated in consisted of area, zone, and rout reconnaissance. This involved going into an area where there were known enemies and gathering information about what the enemy was doing, said Spc. William Gerber, a cavalry scout with the Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry. The scouts then reported to their chain of command so they knew what was going on with those on the battlefield.

“For my part, it gives me a better understanding of my job and what my role is,” said Gerber.

The 1-134th Soldiers spent their

days crawling through dirt and brush, camouflaging their Humvees with trees, navigating surveillance drones over the field, and gathering intelligence about the enemy, all without being seen.

“It’s beneficial to take everyone back to basics and realize what being a scout is all about,” said Spc. Joshua Bowman, a cavalry scout with the Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry.

The opposing force, otherwise known as OP4, that 134th Cavalry was conducting is surveillance on was played by civilians dressed up to portray the enemy. “It’s really nice to go into a mission and not know how they are going to act or what they are going to do,” said Staff Sgt. Mike Belleci, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry. “It makes the training as real as we can possibly get it.”



On The Move: Members of the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) maneuver across Camp Ripley's training areas during an Exportable Combat Training Capability program exercise. XCTC is a field training exercise designed to certify platoon proficiency.

“For the younger guys who haven’t deployed, it gives them a chance to see real life what it would

be like if they were to go into a village and actually deal with the civilian populace,” said Belleci.

EXERCISE continued from page 1.

destroyed or significantly damaged. “This exercise really had its genesis in the days following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks,” said Brig. Gen. Scott Gronewold, Nebraska National Guard assistant adjutant general for Joint Operations. According to Gronewold, Nebraska officials realized there might someday be a situation where the Guard’s headquarters could become uninhabitable, requiring the Guard and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency staffs – at the time housed in a 1960s-era building – to move to alternate working locations.

Gronewold, who was serving as the Nebraska Guard’s joint operations director at the time, said at first glimpse the operation seemed fairly easy to plan and implement. “I figured, heck, we’re mobilizing and deploying hundreds of Guardsmen at a time, how hard could this possibly be?” Gronewold recalled thinking.

Significantly hard, actually. State planners soon realized the Nebraska Guard simply did not have the capabilities required to successfully move to an alternate site and conduct operations. In fact, it would be years until the organization would be able to test its continuity of operations plans after making significant investments in its computer and communications systems.

Finally, in 2013 the Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters staff – which was now housed at the National Guard air base in Lincoln in a new \$30 million headquarters with members of NEMA and a Nebraska State Patrol communications center – conducted its first significant continuity of operations exercise when a portion of the National Guard staff relocated to the Hasting Training Site and spent several days conducting simulated operations involving both federal and state support missions.

At the end of that exercise, Gronewold said, the organization declared it could successfully conduct continuity of operations...with a series of footnotes detailing the areas that hadn’t been tested. These footnotes included such things as the fact that the exercise had only been conducted with a skeleton of the main JFHQ staff and that the JFHQ had remained in operation throughout the event. Additionally, the COOP exercise – as it was called – didn’t significantly involve NEMA or the State Patrol call center.

Filling In the Blanks

Gronewold said when Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac became the adjutant general two years ago, he decided he wanted to “get rid of those footnotes and answer those questions” that remained in 2013. For example, could the Nebraska Military Department’s headquarters staff really relocate to a facility 100 miles away and conduct operations if the JFHQ’s electrical, telephonic and computer systems were unexpectedly shut down?

Additionally, what would happen to the systems when they were shut down – something that hadn’t occurred since the new building was occupied in October 2012? And finally, how would such an event affect the department’s ability to support and interact with its inter-agency partners?

Bohac admitted that actually

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shutting down the JFHQ’s systems was a risky proposition. “I knew we were jumping into the deep end (of the pool) when I said we were turning off the power and locking the doors last fall,” said Bohac. “I know there were quite a few people who weren’t too sure that this was a good idea because I kept getting questions from the staff about ‘Are you really sure this is what you want?’”

“There’s a fine line between being bold and being boldly stupid,” said Bohac, “but I really believed that this is something we needed to know, that these were questions that needed to be answered, before it happened for real.”

That’s where Lt. Col. Eric Hunsberger stepped in. As the Nebraska National Guard’s deputy director of joint planning and exercise design, it was Hunsberger’s job to build and coordinate a massive exercise that would attempt to answer Bohac’s primary questions.

“There were a number of key tasks that we had to accomplish,” said Hunsberger, known for his catchphrase ‘Giddy-up’ whenever he faces a particularly difficult challenge. “First, we wanted to exercise the entire JFHQ staff, including NEMA and the traditional part-time members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard headquarters personnel, and their ability to put the COOP plan into operation. Second, we wanted to test the new Grand Island (Readiness Center) because of its location with NEMA’s alternate (emergency operations center) in Hall County and the location of the readiness center to the (Army Guard aviation’s new) tarmac.”

Additionally, said Col. Wendy Johnson, chief of staff for the Nebraska National Guard joint staff, Guard officials wanted to create a training exercise that would focus on the Joint Force Headquarters’ primary Defense Department mission of providing command and control of National Guard forces during a state emergency while also preparing members of both the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard to support it.

“This was a really good opportunity to implement our mission in the joint force headquarters and use it for entry-level training for those officers who have been assigned to the Nebraska National Guard joint staff,” said Johnson, who prior to assuming her position last year had served as the commander of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Mission Support Group.

According to Johnson, upon arriving at the Guard’s joint force headquarters, she realized that the Nebraska Air Guard – which typically focuses almost exclusively on its operational missions – doesn’t necessarily do as good of job preparing its officers and noncommissioned officer to serve on a planning staff.

“The Army Guard does a pretty good job of rotating people into and out of the Joint Force Headquarters staff,” said Johnson. “So I really wanted to use this exercise as an opportunity train our (Air) staffs for our DoD mission as a joint force headquarters, and also to start



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Conducting A Briefing: Lt. Col. Gordon Bjorman (far left) explains to Nebraska Military Department senior leaders and staff members about the status of the organization’s computer systems during a briefing at the department’s alternate location in Grand Island, Neb.



Photo by 1st Lt. Vicki Kramer

Explaining The Exercise: Lt. Col. Bryan Metcalf explains to Lt. Gov. Mike Foley how the Nebraska Military’s Department’s continuity of operations exercise is playing out during a visit to the Grand Island Readiness Center, Aug. 28.

getting people the experience they need to function in this particular mission area.”

Hunsberger said work on the exercise began in earnest last autumn and involved hundreds of hours of planning, meetings and refinements by both the full-time and part-time staffs, and constant work between members of the Nebraska National Guard, NEMA and the State Patrol. “We wanted to ensure that the scenario that we were developing would drive the (adjutant general’s) decision to move our operations to Grand Island. We also wanted to create a scenario that would allow us to better assess our COOP plan, which was published earlier that year,” Hunsberger said.

Hunsberger said the real catalyst occurred when Bohac publicly declared to the staff that they were going to shut the building and turn off the power. “It probably took several months for the staff to really understand the true impact of what he said we were going to do,” Hunsberger said. “The sheer size of this exercise was almost too big to comprehend.”

Preparations

Although planning for the exercise began in earnest last fall, the work to prepare for a COOP operation began long before that. Years, in fact.

Much of that preparation involved building up the Nebraska Military Department’s computer systems’ capability – the skeleton and circulatory systems, so to speak – that would enable the department to successfully survive a systems shutdown without experiencing loss or “spillage” of data while also giving the department leaders the way to collect and disseminate important information.

According to Lt. Col. Gordon Bjorman, Nebraska Army National Guard director of information management who served as the J-6 during the exercise, this involved constantly examining and refining the organization’s capabilities to sustain itself during a ‘no-notice’ event. Bjorman said this primarily involved managing expectations in a constantly evolving information environment.

“Over time, while we (were) building capacities and capabilities toward (the organization’s information needs), technology was constantly changing, policies and authorizations were constantly changing, Congressional authorities

were constantly changing,” said Bjorman. “Looking back, we (were) working on the same problem that has been on-going since the beginning of operations: How do I ensure that I can have an alternate or redundant means of communications should my primary means not be available?”

In order to solve that problem, Bjorman’s team of computer specialists constantly updated their systems while also testing their ability to successfully provide alternate forms of communication in the event of a system shutdown. He said the problem focused primarily on the ability of the Nebraska Military Department to secure its data in an alternate communications system.

“There is no ‘app’ for the Army network. There is no ‘app’ for continuity of operations, yet our customers are used to having an ‘app’ for most of the (information technology) interaction,” said Bjorman.

“Most people interact with their information technology in a very loose format. However, I have to ensure that we are secure... that is the number one thing... that we are secure before we are effective and effective before we are efficient,” he said.

However, unlike most civilian organizations, a National Guard headquarters can’t simply turn to one of the commonly used technology applications to bring their communications systems back on line, but rather must take an extremely methodical approach. “We complicate it on purpose. We complicate it to ensure security,” Bjorman said.

Bjorman said his team’s work focused on determining whether the redundant systems – and its ability to maintain security of the data – would work as planned.

“The exercise validates where we are in the plan and the exercise helps us gauge where we are in terms of current technology,” he said, “but, we’re always evolving. There is no end-state. These tasks aren’t every two years tasks, these are tasks that we’re constantly working on.”

Bjorman’s staff wasn’t the only Nebraska Military Department entity fully immersed in the planning for the exercise, either. Members of the organization’s Construction and Facilities Maintenance Office also hoped to solve some important lingering questions left over from the move in to the new building. According to Lt. Col. Shane Martin, state CFMO, the goal was to determine if the systems that had been incorporated into the newly built Joint Force Headquarters building would really work as designed.

“This was a huge event for us,” said Martin after the exercise. “We really wanted to test our redundant systems to ensure that they would actually perform the way we wanted them to.”

According to Martin, the primary focus was on the building’s electrical generators and whether

or not they would operate correctly. CFMO staffers and a team of civilian electricians hired to support the exercise also wanted to get a correct schematic understanding of what systems were connected to the generators and which ones weren’t, but possibly could be.

“During the building of the JFHQ, we went through several electrical contractors, so we weren’t sure that we knew exactly which systems were wired into the redundant electrical system and which ones weren’t. And considering what this building is designed to do, that is a pretty significant concern,” Martin said.

This wasn’t just a concern for the Nebraska National Guard, either. Both the NEMA and State Patrol staffs were keenly interested in these questions as well.

“We really wanted to know if the systems would work as they had been designed,” said Lt. Carla Schreiber, Nebraska State Patrol homeland security emergency preparedness coordinator who is one of several State Patrol specialists who work in the JFHQ in Lincoln. “We weren’t sure if the generators would really kick in as they had been designed and whether or not they would fully power our dispatch systems and our ability to use the Federal Criminal History system.”

Schreiber said the State Patrol had conducted a tabletop COOP exercise before, but this was the first time that it had attempted what she termed a “full scale exercise” to test their systems. “This was a huge event for us,” she said. “Additionally, it was extremely important for our people, who are working here on a military installation, to understand the protocols that would go into effect in the event of an emergency.”

Planning for this year’s COOP exercise continued throughout the spring and summer months, culminating in a major tabletop exercise in July. During this exercise representatives from the various Nebraska Military Department entities discussed the overall plan and their individual roles within it. This work involved such questions as how the JFHQ staffs would be notified of a major incident at the building, where those not involved in the exercise would work, and how those who would be active participants would be informed about where and when to report to their new work sites.

That day-long tabletop exercise would form the basis for the final exercise that went into effect on Aug. 27.

Exercise, Exercise, Exercise

Beginning at around 6 a.m. on Aug. 27, phones began to ring at the homes of JFHQ employees. On the line was a member of their individual office staff with important information that was prefaced with the words: Exercise, Exercise, Exercise. Although the words varied, the information was basically the same: *There has been an explosion at the Joint Force Headquarters Building’s Emergency Operations Center. People have been hurt. Some may*



Photo by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Crisis Action Team: Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac (far center) and other senior Nebraska Military Department leaders discuss the ongoing exercise during a Crisis Action Team Meeting, Aug. 29, at the Grand Island Readiness Center.

Airmen travel to South Korea to gain crucial experience

By Staff Sgt. Mary Thach
Staff Photojournalist

Forty-eight members of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing traveled to Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea, for hands-on, job-specific training with active duty counterparts, April 4-18.

The Nebraska Air National Guard sent Airmen from nine shops to the overseas base for two-weeks to seamlessly integrate with their active duty counterparts.

During those two weeks, the Guard members witnessed the fast-pace and broad operations tempos, compared shop operations of active duty versus Guard, and prepared themselves for operations and possible future deployments.

Many of the Nebraska Airmen who traveled to ROK are in upgrade training where core tasks are assigned to an Airman’s specific job and must be practiced. The Airmen must demonstrate proficiency and be able to perform the task on their own prior to having each item signed off and upgraded to their next level of training.

Airmen from petroleum, oils and lubricants, material management, traffic management office, communications, force support, air transportation, vehicle operations, vehicle maintenance and public affairs specialites, traveled to the 51st Fighter Wing to incorporate into active duty missions to remain proficient in their jobs, as well as assist the active duty Air Force with their mission.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Paul Sabatka, acting troop commander and the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron’s first sergeant, the training was extremely important for the Airmen involved, offering them a chance to see how their military skills can support an

important international mission.

“It’s amazing to be able to integrate with the active duty and to be a part of global peace,” he said. “If the military was not here, it would be a whole different story around the world, as far as unrest in this region.”

“To be a part of that is amazing and we have had the opportunity to integrate with the active duty, something we don’t necessarily get to do at home, and it’s been a great experience,” he said.

Sabatka said the 155th’s ARW’s air transportation shop were the group that initially developed the annual training plan. When they opened it up to the entire Nebraska Air National Guard, nine shops took the opportunity to send Airmen to the Republic of Korea to receive active duty training. The air transportation shop’s mission requires world-wide travel annually to one of eight bases in order to receive hands-on training with active duty.

“I have talked to many people and they never thought that they would be in Osan, Korea, performing their duties,” said Sabatka. “This is an awesome experience and I hope that everyone realizes that they are a part of something big. I hope they understand we are a part of global peace.”

Master Sgt. Adam Dytrych, air transportation superintendent, said his Airmen focused on training and practicing for mobilization. In the



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Thach

On The Job: Staff Sgt. Blake Reistroffer, a member of 155th Air Transportation, reviews a program used to check passengers in for flights at the Osan Air Base passenger services counter, April 13. Members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing traveled to Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea, for hands-on, job-specific training.

last four years, 18 air transportation Airmen have deployed, so they need to be prepared and set up for success.

“We have unique opportunities that we get to see and do things that we would normally never get to see or do,” Dytrych said. “This is a real-world mobilization and mission, and we get to do that here day in and day out. It’s not even really practice; we are really doing the mission.”

Dytrych said his goal for his newest air transportation Airmen was to put the whole puzzle together for them while allowing the Airmen to see the entire process in action.

“Normally, they read in a text book or they get taught in career development courses,” he said. “They cannot be proficient at their job without having an experience like this. They get to see how it all ties together and how big the mission is.”

“I am proud of how the guys have come over here and integrated right in with the active duty,” Dytrych added. “It is sobering. The tradi-

Master Sgt. Jamison Nitz, vehicle maintenance supervisor, said the Korean training was extremely important for him and his two troops because it enabled them to work with and on a number of different vehicles the Nebraska Air Guard does not utilize.

“We are here to assist the active duty and to get the training that we need,” said Nitz.

Nitz said that is pretty important considering that on a past deployment he was required to maintain numerous vehicles he had never seen or operated before.

He said he wanted his Airmen to receive the training that they need so that they do not have an experience on a deployment similar to his.

“That is experience that (they) can always take with them to any base that they go to or any deployment they go on,” said Nitz.

Master Sgt. Sherri Bejvancesky, who recently cross-trained into airfield management, and Senior

tional (Airmen) train every month. Then to have them come here and see how efforts pan out over here is very impressive. Everybody is professional. It is a good feeling.”

According to the Airmen who participated in the annual training, the experience was more beneficial than an average annual training at their home station.

Airman Anthony Ewing said they saw the opportunity to receive valuable training on items on their core task list that they could not receive at home base due to different missions and equipment available. That made the opportunity to good to turn down.

“This is a great training opportunity for the two of us that are in upgrade training to have 15 of the 32 training requirements – our core tasks – signed off for our upgrade training that we would not be able to do or get accomplished at home,” said Bejvancesky. “Ultimately, we would have to go somewhere else. We would have to go up to Offutt Air Force Base, which sometimes they don’t have the exact equipment or aircraft to get the item checked off.”

Bejvancesky said the mission at home differs greatly due to a less active operations tempo and less diverse aircraft. “At Lincoln, we have a shared runway and we don’t have the opportunities like we (do) here to do our job,” said Bejvancesky.

“During our time here, we were able to conduct airfield inspections and airfield checks. They had an inspection and they have fighter jets,” Bejvancesky added. “They had a bird strike, which activated an in-flight emergency, and (we) had to respond with a quick reaction checklist and (notify) all of their agencies on base.”

Probably the greatest advantage of sending nine shops from the Nebraska Air National Guard to Osan Air Base was that it enabled the Guardsmen to network with their active duty counterparts, allowing them to share ideas on what processes work within each shop, how active duty versus Guard run their shops, and to swap ideas.

“We can interact, jump in and do our job with active duty and be a total force, one force, with active duty,” said Bejvancesky.

EXERCISE continued from page 11.

be dead. The electricity, telephone and computer systems have all been knocked out. Stand by for additional information.

In reality, that “explosion” was the start of the exercise during which department officials had cut the power and computer systems, beginning the concrete examination of the buildings redundant systems. It was also the start of the more traditional exercise scenario designed to test the staff’s ability to relocate and conduct its federal and state support functions from a different facility without such “luxuries” as computer and telephone service.

Following an early morning meeting by the organization’s Joint Crisis Action Team, or JCAT, which is made up of the adjutant general and several other senior department leaders, it was determined that the organization’s COOP plan needed to be enacted. That was followed by an order to a portion of the JFHQ staff to report to the Grand Island Readiness Center based upon a phasing schedule.

For the next three days, that staff would operate out of the recently opened Grand Island facility where they were challenged to not only successfully continue to support its federal requirements, but also successfully coordinate several major state emergencies at the same time. These emergencies ranged from a major Guard call-up to state active duty to support an avian flu outbreak in northeastern Nebraska, supporting the on-going federal investigation at the JFHQ, a train derailment in central Nebraska, and major tornado outbreaks and a subsequent civil disturbance in eastern Nebraska.

The goal, said Hunsberger, was to stress the staff’s capabilities and drive the organization to establish a Joint Task Force requiring additional military assistance from neighboring states and federal

Title 10 forces.

“We really wanted to simulate the chaos that occurs on the first day of a major series of events,” said Hunsberger, who brought in teams of Guard specialists from Nebraska neighboring states to help keep the participants moving.

In order to do that, Hunsberger and his staff had worked hard to ensure that they could bring as much realism to the exercise as possible. For example, during the planning phases Hunsberger’s staff contacted the local Federal Bureau of Investigation office in Omaha to find out more about how the FBI would handle a potential terrorist event on a military installation.

So, Hunsberger was ready when Bohac asked to speak to an FBI representative about their investigation during the initial JCAT meeting.

“We had actually talked with their subject matter expert several times during the six months leading into the exercise,” said Hunsberger. “So, when the adjutant general asked to speak to the FBI, I called (the FBI agent) up and put him in contact with the general.”

That level of planning was striking, said Bohac. “I was amazed when I found out that I was actually speaking with the FBI agent in charge of conducting these types of investigations,” said Bohac. “I thought I was just talking with a role player.”

For members of the JFHQ staff, probably the most stressful part of the exercise were the daily update briefings, during which they had to stand-up in the makeshift Joint Operation Center and explain to the adjutant general and senior department leaders how their sections were supporting the ongoing operations while also being prepared to answer a battery of questions they hadn’t thought of.

One of those supporting the

exercise was Maj. Nicole Nuss, a Nebraska Air National Guard officer who was recently assigned to serve as the senior Guard financial officer on the joint staff. There, she was responsible for both tracking and predicting state and federal financial needs.

“It was challenging not being part of the planning and coordination processes and never having worked in the Joint Operations Center before,” said Nuss, who works fulltime as the deputy human resources officer for the Nebraska National Guard. “I had also never experienced a COOP exercise before, so I really had to back up a couple steps and really think about what my primary missions were.”

“It was really hectic, especially considering that we initially had to do all of our work without the computer systems and telephone systems that we’re used to,” Nuss added. “Realistically, it helped us realize what tools we really need should a real world emergency occur and how we can adapt and overcome the situation.”

Johnson said another positive aspect of the exercise was that it enabled the JOC staff to relook at its basic mission and how it determines whether or not it is truly accomplishing it.

“One of the things I saw initially was that the staff was really focused on meeting the adjutant general’s informational needs, which is extremely important,” said Johnson, who has experience working at a wing emergency operations center. “But one of the things that I noticed that we weren’t doing was developing the metrics that we needed to determine if we were meeting the basic mission’s needs... we didn’t have the indicators to tell us when we had met our end-state.”

“So one of the things we started working on was determining how we could do this,” Johnson added.

“To me, that was a significant learning point.”

Testing, Proving

While this was going on, back at the JFHQ, the information management and CFMO staffs were compiling the results of their test. According to both Bjorman and Martin, the grades were extremely positive.

As the information staff shut down the systems in a simulated loss of power, Bjorman said they carefully reviewed and documented their procedures on each piece of equipment. “We have real world data here and we needed to make sure, as a part of this exercise, that we did not, one, lose data and two, expose data,” he said.

In the end, Bjorman said the event was extremely successful, something he credited his staff in achieving during their 12 months of extensive planning. “The key to any of these events is a group of professionals who have a plan, who exercise the plan, (who have) a contingency for when things go wrong, and a group of professionals who take care of business.”

“And that’s what we had in this case,” he added.

Bjorman said along with successfully testing the shutdown and redundant systems, the information management team gained a tremendous amount of knowledge along the way. For example, he said, they gained a better understanding of the relationships between the various pieces of equipment that they manage. That’s particularly important, Bjorman said, considering recent “spillages” of data that have been in the news.

“They all typically trace back to some simple things,” he said. “(This exercise) gives us the chance to review the procedures and policies for the simple tasks so that we’re not exposing the organization.”

Martin said the CFMO staff was also greatly pleased by the results.

“Not only did the system operate the way it was designed to do, we found out that we have an excess capacity within our generator systems,” said Martin. “Conceivably, we could operate every single system within JFHQ on the generators.”

“That’s a pretty significant finding,” Martin added.

Worth the Effort

By Saturday afternoon, the exercise was officially concluded. The next morning, the staff met with the teams of evaluators and received their verdicts, which universally showed that the Nebraska Military Department had indeed successfully moved nearly 100 miles away and continued to operate despite significant challenges resulting from the loss of telephone and computer systems.

“One of the things that I found out,” said Nuss, “was that I have a lot more to learn. We did a good job, but there’s always more to learn, there are always ways to improve.”

Johnson echoed those comments. “There was a lot of good learning that occurred... me included,” she said, adding that many of those lessons are now being incorporated into several Nebraska National Guard plans that will enable the department to tackle a future challenge without “having to start from scratch.”

According to Bohac, the team performed admirably under difficult situations, particularly in continuing to find ways to operate when the normal systems simply didn’t work. “I was particularly proud to see that evolution of figuring out how to get information,” Bohac said during the Sunday after action review.

“We know, walking out that door, that we can do this... and we’re really good at it.”

Fiery Training



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Thach

Tackling A Blaze: The University of Missouri trained 25 firefighters from the 155th Fire Department on a mobile simulated aircraft trainer in Lincoln, Neb., June 6. The mobile simulated aircraft training team travelled to airports around the United States to train and re-certify airport firefighters.

SIMULATOR continued from page 1.

nose and nears the refueling socket fifteen inches below the pilot's front windshield.

The Airman hesitates to press the button as the nozzle hovers over the target—his delay proves costly.

A violent burst of wind pitches the bomber's nose toward the tanker as the boom nozzle lunges unsuccessfully at the opening. Instantly the nozzle smacks the windshield, cracking both on the \$283 million bomber. The broken glass forms a spider web on both windshields.

"Well, I've never seen that before," the voice behind the Airman observes.

Gravely damaged, the B-1 zooms from view. The Airman's stomach turns, sweat collects on his forehead. This flight is over.

Luckily for the Airman, he is aboard the 155th ARW's new \$1.1 million Boom Operating Simulator System (BOSS). Also luck for the squadron, the Airman is not a real boom operator and the bomber is not a real plane. The digitally-rendered B-1 Lancer, cracked windshield and all, exists only within the safe confines of the high-definition screens in the boom pod, a product of the computer program whirring nearby.

The voice belongs to instructor Gene Ernst, the man controlling the weather and the B-1 Lancer. Ernst chuckles as the Airman regroups himself before climbing out of the boom pod, which is an exact replica of the one found on the Nebraska Air Guard's Stratotankers. And although the mission was purely educational, it does serve a pretty big purpose: the system, which debuted in October 2014, means serious improvements—at far lower costs—to Airman readiness for the 19 enlisted boom operators assigned to the Lincoln, Nebraska, -based aerial refueling wing.

From his five monitors beside the machine, which measures 22 feet by 21 feet, Ernst, a retired boom operator with 28 years of Air National Guard experience, controls the weather, the planes, even the time of day.

"I can do clouds, fog, pitch and roll. It's as realistic as it can get with current technology," Ernst said recently. So realistic, in fact, that some onlookers develop motion sickness while watching the video displays.

The launch of the new system makes the National Guard air base in Lincoln one of 16 in the country



New Equipment: Nebraska Air National Guard boom operators hone their skills refueling aircraft in the newly acquired boom operator simulator, Aug. 25. The Nebraska Air Guard is the first Guard unit to receive the BOSS 59-1495.

to house the BOSS.

"We don't want our base to be the only one without a system," said Ernst. Instead, the 155th ARW can count itself on the cutting edge of efficient and effective training.

Tech. Sgt. Brad Musick, another 155th ARW boom instructor, said the wing has a clear plan to take full advantage of the addition.

"Once the (technical orders) are updated and the BOSS is certified, it will be used for semi-annual continuation training of emergency procedures and general checklist usage in air refueling," said Musick, adding that the system has significant strengths. "It benefits the wing by allowing the boom operators to see emergencies we normally wouldn't see. That keeps our skills sharp."

For example, the topography that the Airman saw below him came from a Google Maps overlay—capable of portraying Nebraska corn fields or foreign windswept deserts with equal accuracy.

Theoretically, simulator missions could be designed in this bay to mimic the backdrop and challenges unique to the various theaters the Airmen may find themselves operating in. Additionally, by using safety reports from the field, boom operators could then run test scenarios and prevent repeating the errors of their real-life counterparts were they to find themselves in a similar situation elsewhere.

Not only does the boom pod look real, it sounds real, too. A Bose sound system inside the pod mimics the Stratotanker's noise levels



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mary Thach

High-Tech Capabilities: Tech. Sgt. Bradley Musick, a boom operator with the Nebraska Air National Guard, controls a boom simulator, challenging a boom operator inside of the machine to deal with different aircraft to refuel, weather patterns and changes in lighting.

while Ernst, from outside, throws curveballs at the operators inside that range from blown circuit breakers and wobbly boom equipment to turbulence and aggressive or novice receiver pilots.

It's so realistic that, if an operator listens closely, they can hear a circuit breaker pop.

The machine is fully-automated—capable of recognizing an operator's voice and answering back. It is this feature, said Ernst, which can be programmed to mimic real-life emergency scenarios and provide invaluable experience to Airmen without their ever leaving the ground.

In years past, staying qualified obligated boom operators to participate in actual flights, the price of which adds up as the operating cost per KC-135 flying hour exceeds \$11,000. And even when simulators became available, 155th boom operators had to travel to Scott Air

Force Base in Illinois, a trek they made only twice a year.

According to Ernst, the benefits are clear. "It's going to increase the ability and the training of the boom operators. Instead of only going to Scott AFB twice a year, now they can access the simulator any time they want."

And instead of making due with a limited number of training sorties, Airmen can perfect their technical skills through repetition on the simulator.

Because of the potential for the system to enhance Guardsmen proficiency, Ernst expects technical order guidance to begin integrating these missions into student training later this summer.

Once students complete a mission, an instructor can review with them the entire exchange on computer screens nearby, a sort of play-by-play of the action after the fact.

And while the Airman in this scenario cozied up with a B-1, the program can simulate missions with any aircraft the U.S. Air Force refuels, from U.S. Navy planes and NATO aircraft to those involved in secret operations and even the Stratotanker's Multi-Point Refueling System. Previously, as Ernst points out, Airmen could only qualify on the system while deployed. In the future, however, they will be able to qualify at their home base and be ready when the time comes to contribute on deployment, when they are called on to fly other squadrons' planes.

According to Ernst, Airmen can expect greater integration in the years to come.

"In the future the 155th will get a pilot simulator, which will sit out in the neighboring bay. Then they can simulate the entire mission. Later, we'll hook it up to receivers off base," he said.

Officer Candidate School Graduation

Guard's newest officers prepare to take on new leadership roles

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard officer corps welcomed four new second lieutenants into their ranks while a fifth Soldier accepted his certificate of eligibility during the Aug. 8th graduation ceremony for Officer Candidate Class 58, held at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall.

Additionally, a sixth Soldier was honored during the ceremony from the 2015 Accelerated Officer Candidate Class. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Traditional Officer Candidate School consists of 17 months of leadership training, which included two weeks of initial annual training followed by one weekend of training per month before the final two-weeks of annual training. The course serves as a major way of commissioning second lieutenants into the Nebraska Army National Guard and local U.S. Army Reserve units.

The National Guard Bureau's Accelerated Officer Candidate School is a challenging eight-week, three-phase commissioning program.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock

New Gold Bars: James Ethier receives his new rank as a newly commissioned second lieutenant from his wife and daughter during the Officer Candidate Class 58 graduation, held Aug. 8 at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Graduating from OCS Class 58 were James Ethier, Jonathan Lintz, Christopher Rewczuk, and Christopher Waldron. Accepting the certificate of eligibility was Brian Campbell.

Graduating from the 2015 Accelerated OCS was David Hron.

According to the candidates, they are proud of all they accomplished during their journey through OCS.

"It was very tough up front and very humbling," said Ethier. "The humbling experience really brought the class together as a team and

showed us we couldn't just rely upon ourselves to do the training. (We had to) depend on our battle buddies to get through it."

The officer candidates also acknowledged that they gained significantly from the OCS cadre as well. "We had an amazing staff and support given to us during our 17 month OCS journey," said Campbell. "We thank the cadre for your mentorship and guidance."

Earning OCS 58's Academic Excellence Award was Lintz, who had the highest average score on the 10 formal evaluations during the Officer Candidate School. The Leadership Excellence Award was presented to Ethier, who showed the most outstanding leadership skills.

Earning the physical fitness award was Rewczuk, who had the highest average on three Army Physical Fitness Test during the school. Rewczuk also earned the Distinguished Honor Graduate award, while Ethier placed second and Lintz took third.



Happy Day: Christopher Waldron receives his new rank from members of his family while he shakes hands with a fellow officer during the Officer Candidate Class 58 graduation Aug. 8, at Camp Ashland, Neb.



Photos by Spc. Anna Pongo

Helping Hands: Warrant Officer Candidate John Langley paints the wall of the Wahoo Girl Scout Clubhouse, Aug. 8, during his Warrant Officer Candidate School's community project. The project was designed to strengthen ties between the Nebraska National Guard and Wahoo, Neb.

Former Regional Training Institute sergeants latest to enter Hall of Fame

By Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 209th Regional Training Institute Hall of Fame added two more names to its impress honor roll, Aug. 8, when Retired 1st Sgt. Matthew Dorsey and Retired Command Sgt. Maj. Leon Haith were inducting into the prestigious institute.

Both Dorsey and Haith were honored during the Officer Candidate School graduation ceremony held at Memorial Hall on Camp Ashland, Nebraska.



Dorsey



Haith

The RTI Hall of Fame was established to honor former staff members and/or graduates of the officer candidate program who distinguished themselves in military or civilian pursuits. Individuals are selected based on their contributions to the overall development of the RTI or the Nebraska National Guard Military Academy.

Dorsey served in a variety of roles at the RTI including instructor and senior instructor for the Primary Leadership Development Course and Warrior Leader Course, battalion and regimental operations non-commissioned officer-in-charge, quality assurance officer and regimental first sergeant. He was also selected to provide Noncommissioned Officer Education System training to Soldiers in Sinai, Egypt.

Dorsey was recognized for his invaluable and dedicated efforts through two three-year accreditations cycles resulting in the coveted Institute of Excellence rating achieved by regimental headquarters in all three battalions.

In addition to his efforts supporting the RTI, Dorsey was

selected by National Guard Bureau to travel to other states and conduct site assessment visits to assist other academies in preparation for their U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Accreditation visits.

He was also selected to travel across the country as an instructor for NGB's School House Manager's Course, proving training to newly appointed RTI staff.

"One of the things I enjoyed the most about being out at the (Regional Training Institute) was seeing the Soldiers going from standing within the ranks to standing in front of the ranks," said Dorsey. "They set

up and take charge, just like these officer candidates in front of me."

Haith served as the RTI's regimental command sergeant major and non-commissioned officer academy commandant. He played a major role in increasing the student load during the 2009 and 2010 training years, which resulted in over 5,000 Soldiers graduating each year from the NCO Academy.

Haith also provided leadership and dedication to the RTI when he helped partner with Fort Riley, Kansas, to implement a satellite non-commissioned officer education system academy which was capable of training 1,420 Warrior Leader Course students per year.

His dedication to the mission of the RTI was shown when the RTI underwent the first accreditation which resulted in the Institution of Excellence.

"The phrase 'Living the dream' was coined while I was out here with the RTI. I truly felt we were living the dream," said Haith. "We had the greatest job in the world. All we had to do was train Soldiers to lead."

Warrant officer candidates use community service project to refine new leadership skills

By Spc. Anna Pongo
Staff Photojournalist

Community support of the National Guard is a huge contributing factor to each day's success.

In appreciation for this support, whether it's from family, friends, or employers, Guardsmen often team up and work together to give back to their communities.

This was one of the goals for five warrant officer candidates who worked together to paint the Wahoo Girl Scout clubhouse in Wahoo, Nebraska, on Aug. 8. Warrant Officer Candidates Jeffery Daniels, Alisha Kelly, Shane Harsh, John Langley and Joshua Blomstedt worked from 9 a.m. until mid-afternoon.

This outreach event was part of the Phase Two, Warrant Officer Candidacy School. The first phase was online before any of the WOC drills. Phase Two is six months of drills consisting of ruck marches, a physical readiness training test, and a lot academics, said Kelly. Phase Three is a two-week annual training at Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

"I wanted to be a subject matter expert," said Daniels on why he wanted to become a warrant officer. "Be able to train people and then just be able to influence future Soldiers coming in, in what they want to do with their careers. I re-



More Paint! Paint is prepared by a warrant officer candidate as a second coat of brown paint is applied to the Wahoo Girl Scout Clubhouse, Aug. 8, during a Warrant Officer Candidate School community project in Wahoo, Neb.

ally enjoy what I do, technical wise, and I wanted to get more entwined with leadership and making a useful impact in my unit."

Leadership is one of the key skills being cultivated by the candidates. This skill is developed by assigning each candidate a special duty.

Langley was appointed as project manager for the WOC community outreach. He contacted various locations, worked out the schedule and got supplies for the community outreach mission.

Through their hard work and dedication, the warrant officer candidates were able to thank those in the Wahoo area for everything they

do for the National Guard.

"Any project that we get involved in is important, just because... the communities they support us when we leave, when we come home," said Kelly. "Coming back here and doing something selfless for the community shows our appreciation back to them."

Brig. Gen. Richard Dahlman and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Theresa Domeier stopped to visit the WOCs as they painted the clubhouse. After taking pictures with the candidates and talking about how their training was progressing, Dahlman encouraged them, "I see great stuff in our (Nebraska National Guard) future and you guys are part of it."

Historian's Corner

..... Preserving the legacy of Nebraska's Citizen Soldiers & Airmen

Stories of Nebraska's National Guardsmen

Nebraska Airman recalls parachuting from stricken aircraft

By Gerald D. "Jerry" Meyer
State Historian

Tuesday morning, Sept. 20, 1955, dawned clear and cool in Casper, Wyoming, as members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 173rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron boarded two aircraft for a return flight back to Lincoln after a busy weekend of gunnery training. The first aircraft was a C-47 transport, the military version of a DC-3, while the second was the C-45, known in civilian circles as a Beech D18. The crew of the smaller C-45 consisted of two pilots and four support crew.

Soon, both planes taxied and took off into the clear Wyoming sky. What those aboard didn't know, though, was shortly after taking off from the airfield, four members of the C-45 would choose to parachute from the plane about 12 miles from the airfield.

Ersten S. "Bud" Dunklau was born in 1932 and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska. As a young man, he lost his father and had to learn to work during World War II to help his mother.

Dunklau had a love of aviation and model aircraft from a young age. Prior to graduating from Lincoln High School in Lincoln, Nebraska, he joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in 1948 at the age of 16.

Dunklau's love of cars and airplanes made him a natural mechanic. However, since he wouldn't receive his driver's license until he turned 18, he had to hitch rides to the base from Col. John M. Campbell, since he didn't have a driver's license until he turned 18.

Dunklau mobilized with the unit during the Korean War in 1951 and deployed to Bangor, Maine, and later to training in Texas. After he returned from the deployment he worked at Ike's Standard Station (corner of 27th and Holdrege). The owner was Alden Ike, a Nebraska Air Guard pilot who would die on Jan. 24, 1954, when his F-80C crashed.

Dunklau eventually joined the

full-time force at the Lincoln, Nebraska, air base where he served as a crew chief on the flight line working on piston and jet aircraft.

The year 1955 was a big year for the 173rd FIS as the unit was preparing to send crews and aircraft to the World Wide Air National Guard Gunnery Meet in Boise in October. The unit had just completed an intensive annual training in August in Casper where Nebraska Air Guard pilots flew more than 500 tactical jet hours and expended more than 67,000 rounds of 50 caliber ammunition during the two week period. The unit following up the training in September when it sent pilots and crews to Casper to fine-tune their skills for the October gunnery meet.

Dunklau and the support crews boarded the two transports in Lincoln for the trip out to Casper on the evening of Friday, Sept. 16, 1955. The unit's F-80 fighters had already departed and were enroute when the transports and support crews flew off into the evening sky from Lincoln.

Dunklau said he remembers looking out into the night sky on the flight and having a premonition about jumping from a plane. As the transports settled down in Casper, the crews got to work getting the planes ready for the long weekend of gunnery training. It was an intensive weekend of training and the thoughts of the flight soon faded away as Dunklau worked on the planes during the two days of training.

As the support crew ascended out of Casper on Sept. 20, their thoughts were on getting back to Lincoln and family. The pilots of the C-45, Lloyd Johnson and Milton Hagelberger, were joined by four support crew members: Bud Dunklau, Ron Lutz, James Malone and Joe Gregg, who rode in the back



Dunklau



155th Air Refueling Wing historical photo

Back In Wyoming: (From left) Sgt. Ersten S. "Bud" Dunklau, Sgt. Elmo "Joe" Gregg, Sgt. James Malone and Sgt. Ron Lutz pose for a photograph in Casper, Wyo., shortly after a mechanical error shortened the flight and caused the four Nebraska Air National Guard Airmen to parachute from their plane on Sept. 20, 1955.

of the small, two-engine transport.

As the plane reached 1,000 feet the port side engine feathered and lost power. Suddenly the plane started to struggle to maintain altitude in the thin Wyoming atmosphere. Both pilots shouted to the crew to start throwing out everything that wasn't needed to reduce weight. The citizens of Wyoming and the crew of the C-47 noticed tool boxes, seats, etc... flying out the open door of the struggling aircraft and falling to the ground below.

The C-45 just cleared a ridge east of Casper and was still struggling to ascend when one of the pilots turned to the four and said "you might have to go."

The crew in the back was very familiar with the Switlik backpack parachute that was standard gear with aircrews after World War II. All four quickly put the parachutes on and checked each other before the order was given. The plane was descending down to 500 feet (the same altitude at which modern Airborne combat jumps exit) and the order was given to jump.

Joe Gregg was the first out the door of the plane and when he missed the rear vertical stabilizer the others prepared to jump. James "Jim" Malone hesitated ahead of Dunklau because of his fear of landing in the North Platte River, which was below the aircraft, but soon he, too, tumbled out the door.

Dunklau exited right after Malone and immediately pulled his

D-Ring ripcord on the parachute. He looked up to see Ron Lutz right behind him and noted his orange/white paneled parachute was fully open. He landed quickly right in the vicinity of the others except Malone, who landed in the river and was flailing around in the foot deep water looking for a cigarette to calm his nerves and celebrate.

All four landed on the ranch of Mr. George Carr, who showed up shortly with his young son to check on the aviators. The plane made a slow loop back to the west and eventually made it to the runway in Casper. The C-47 banked and made sure the crew on the ground was safe and headed back to Casper.

The base ambulance showed up a couple of hours later to pick up the four.

Later, the four Airmen and the others on the two aircraft posed for a group picture back at Casper with the parachutes and jumpers, who were smiling widely.

Back in Nebraska, word was being circulated that an Air Guard aircraft had suffered a mishap. Carol Dunklau, Bud's fiancée, heard from her brother who worked at KFOR Radio that there was a mishap and some of the men jumped. She soon got word from Dunklau that everything was okay and that she needed to drive his 1952 Ford convertible, which she had never driven, to meet him when they landed later that day.

A few months after the jump

the four were presented with Caterpillar Pins and Certificates from the Switlik Parachute Company of Trenton, New Jersey. Dunklau's certificate reads: "This is to certify that Ersten S. Dunklau as a member of the Caterpillar Club whose life was spared on September 20, 1955, because of an emergency parachute jump from an aircraft. This certificate is bestowed to the end that this safety medium in the art of flying may be furthered."

The accompanying silver pin shows a caterpillar with the words "caterpillar club" on it. The symbol of the worm relates to silk and its use in early parachutes.

The Switlik Company was founded in 1920 and is in its fourth generation of family ownership in maritime and aviation survival equipment today. The first person to test jump a Switlik parachute was the aviator, Amelia Earhart.

On Aug. 4, 2015, Bud Dunklau sat down for an interview on the 60th anniversary of his jump in September. He is the sole surviving member of the group that exited that C-45. He and his wife Carol, attended the funeral of James Malone in June 2015. Both pilots of the plane are also deceased.

Dunklau said he remembers it all in vivid detail today. He went on to have a successful automotive firm in Lincoln for 55 years.

Bud Dunklau is one of many great stories of the Nebraska National Guard.

Nebraska Air Guard air refueling wing crews welcome World War II veteran pilot to air base



(Above) **War Stories:** Col. Les Arasmith (Ret.), a World War II veteran and ace fighter pilot, visits the Nebraska Air National Guard air base to share war stories with members of the 155th Operations Group and tour a KC-135R Stratotanker in Lincoln, Neb., July 16.

(Right) **Flight Deck Conversation:** Retired Col. Les Arasmith, a World War II veteran and ace fighter pilot, sits in the cockpit of a KC-135 Stratotanker with Lt. Col. John Williams, a pilot with the Nebraska Air National Guard base, during a July 16 visit to the Nebraska Air National Guard base in Lincoln, Neb.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Mary Thach

Stapleton senior unveils newest tanker nose art

By Staff Sgt. Mary Thach and Senior Airman Marshall Mauer
Staff Photojournalists

An artistic vision hatched at ground level in Stapleton, Nebraska, will now be visible around the world after the latest 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker nose art was unveiled during an Aug. 8 ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

Mariah Harm, a Stapleton, Neb., native and senior at Stapleton High School, joined a select list of Nebraska artists when her design was chosen as part of the 155th ARW annual nose art program, a yearly tradition in which the Nebraska Air National Guard nominates a Nebraska town or city to be commemorated on sheet metal. Entries for the contest are selected from community schools.

From a young age, Mariah has developed her talents in several ways. “I consider myself an artist,” said Mariah. “I’ve been taking art ever since elementary school and into high school. I’ve been doing a lot of shows, school conferences, art districts and open theater.”

Mariah credited the heritage of her small town, with its population of 305, as providing all the inspiration she needed. The design features two arms extended, shaking hands. Encircling the image is a rope. And in the background, the artwork pays homage to another Stapleton staple—Nebraska’s Biggest Little Rodeo.

“One (individual) is (wearing) a business jacket; one is (wearing) an old farm shirt. That is to represent how business and agriculture come together. In Stapleton, that’s a big deal. Agriculture and business are a big part of our little town. I chose the silhouette of the horses in the background because we do a lot of horse work and cattle work.”

The handshake, said Mariah, was front and center for a reason.

“One of the main parts of my design was a handshake, because the symbolism of a handshake is equality, trust, it’s a fair deal. It shows everybody that you’re working to do (some) good.”

For Mariah, nose art is familiar and familial. Mariah’s father, Senior Master Sgt. Toby Harm, developed the nose art program when it was first introduced 11 years ago. Back then, Harm used graphic software and a vinyl imaging machine. When the events of 9/11 required a larger global presence from the KC-135R Stratotanker, Harm was there to outfit many of the aircraft with unique designs in a hurry.

Despite his own previous involvement in the program, the elder Harm said his daughter was solely responsible for the winning submission. “I didn’t tell her what to draw or how to do it,” Harm said. “I just



Photo by Staff Sgt. Mary Thach

Happy Artist: Mariah Harm, a Stapleton, Neb., native and senior at Stapleton High School, unveils her artwork on the nose of a KC-135R Stratotanker at the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Aug. 8, in Lincoln, Neb.

told her some of the things to expect if it was selected and she did the rest on her own.”

As Harm enters the twilight of his own career, Mariah’s work has taken on extra meaning.

“It’s amazing to me, knowing my time here is very short, but there will still be a piece of family history on this airplane even when I’m not here.”

According to Harm, several onlookers took notice of Mariah’s poise and delivery during the ceremony. “A couple officers came up and asked if she’d be a recruit. But she’s her own person and I don’t want to influence that at all.”

Wherever Mariah decides to go next, she’ll bring a lot of creativity to the table, especially if it includes a drawing board.

Long before it reached the Cornhusker State, nose art enjoyed a storied history all its own. Originating on the fuselages of German and Italian fighter planes in 1913, the artwork was adopted by American forces soon after. The colorful and creative outlet provided aircrew members with a morale lift and way to express some personality in decades past. A century later, the Nebraska Air National Guard’s nose art program continues to accomplish just that.

Families, employers watch as Soldiers leap into September sky

By Spc. William Schneider
Staff Photojournalist

On a mildly cool, sunny Nebraska morning, Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 195th Forward Support Company jumped from 1,500 feet into a vivid blue sky, Sept. 12, to exercise their parachuting skills before landing in the freshly mown green grass of the Husker Drop Zone in front of an audience of family, friends and employers.

The jump was part of the unit’s family day and boss lift event.

“I think this is awesome,” said Matt Stockfeld, director of Educational Technology at Nebraska Methodist College. “I’m just impressed with how fine-tuned everything operates.”

Stockfeld was on hand at the event to observe his employee, Spc. Pablo Solorio of the 195th FSC, jump from the CH-47 Chinook helicopter in the first chalk (wave of jumpers). He also took part of the boss lift where he had the opportunity to ride in a Blackhawk helicopter.

“That’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” Stockfeld said after flying in the helicopter. “It’s a big-



Special Moment: Spc. Pablo Solorio spends some time with his daughter, Paula, before jumping out of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, Sept. 12.

ger rush than the Husker game.”

Stockfeld said he has always been a fan of the military and being able to see what Solorio, a help desk analyst for the Nebraska Methodist College’s Education Technology Department, does for his training was eye-opening.

“Prior to Pablo we had a previous Guard member (working for us) and didn’t know what that entailed,” Stockfeld said, “but this allows me to see the bigger picture up close and personal.”

Having family and friends come to watch the unit do their training may seem mundane for the Soldiers doing what they train for month in and month out, but Solorio was happy to have their presence.

“I just love the support,” Solorio said who also had his family in attendance. “They get to know ‘Hey, this is what we do.’ It’s hard to explain it and it’s easier to show.”



Photos by Spc. William Schneider

Leap of Faith: Soldiers jump out of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter as it flies 1,500 feet above “Husker Drop Zone,” Sept. 12.

Don’t forget to update critical retirement, other information

Have you ever attended a Retiree Appreciation Day Event? If so, you know the advantages of visiting with local representatives and support agencies who can help you through the myriad of paperwork when apply for benefits.

The next retiree appreciation day was held Sunday, October 18, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. at the Offutt Air Force Base exchange. They had a number of information booths and local agency representatives available to answer your questions.

A similar retiree day was held Oct. 23 at Fort Riley, Kansas. Retirees can go online to <https://soldierforlife.army.mil> and check the Army Echoes site. These appreciation days are open to all services and retirees. We encourage all of our retirees to take advantage of them.

■Nebraska license, ID card update

Veterans – have you registered with the Nebraska Department of Veteran’s Affairs to have a Veteran’s designation displayed on your Nebraska license or ID card? It’s easy, painless, and quick. Go to the registry site at <http://www.veterans.nebraska.gov/> or contact the VA at (402) 471-2450. Questions related to this registry should be directed to: Nebraska Department of Veteran’s Affairs, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509.

If the “Veteran” designation is added when you renew your driver’s license, there is no extra fee to do so. If you want to apply for a replacement license to have the designation shown, you will have

Nebraska National Guard Retiree News & Notes

By retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 William Nelson

to pay a replacement fee.

All veterans and retirees who are eligible and who want to add the “Veteran” designation to their driver licenses or State ID cards are encouraged to do so at www.CLICK-DMV.Nebraska.gov. They may also do so at any driver licensing office.

■Grand Island reunion

Retirees in the Grand Island area take note: Combat Support Company, 1-195th Armor Battalion had a reunion on Saturday, Nov. 7, at the United Veterans Club Memorial Hall in Grand Island. The social was scheduled to run from 5-6 p.m., followed by dinner and a meeting.

What a good time to reacquire yourself with fellow retirees.

■Time to review myPay, other accounts

Have you reviewed your myPay account lately? You can update your tax information, withholding amounts, and take care of any pay related issues right at the touch of your fingers. Have there been changes in your family? When you get married, lose a spouse, or have children, the change can affect your account. The Defense Finance and

Accounting Service (DFAS) will require documentation. You can fax documents to them at 800-469-6559, or mail to DFAS, PO Box 7130, London, KY 40742-7130.

Make sure you check your beneficiary designation for arrears of retired pay when you pass.

Also, while you’re at it, check the expiration date on your ID card. Your Retired ID Card is your identification for Tricare, Tricare for Life, and to validate your Medicare eligibility.

Have you moved, changed a phone number or added an email address? Please contact us to update your information so we can keep our information current.

■Funeral Honors update

Did you know military funeral honors are available for your funeral? Ensure your surviving family advises the funeral home you are a veteran and entitled to military honors. The funeral home will contact the Military Funeral Honors Team and make arrangements.

■From the desk of Sgt. 1st Class Ed Luhn.

Contact us to assist you with

your retirement processing and questions. My contact information is (402) 309-8162 or Vincent.e.luhn.mil@mail.mil. Your Tri-Care manager is Staff Sgt. Travis Garrett and he may be reached at (402) 309-1541 or travis.s.garrett.mil@mail.mil. Contact him for all your Tri-Care related questions. The United Health Care for Military and Veterans phone number is 1-877-988-9378.

We’re located in the Joint Forces Headquarters Building, 2433 NW 24th St, Lincoln, NE 68524. Call us at any time.

■Final thoughts

As always, thank you for your dedicated military service. The Nebraska National Guard is rightfully proud of its heritage and you were part of that legacy.

For the early birds, here’s the breakfast site information as we know it:

Lincoln: Army National Guard retirees: FIRST Monday of each month, 7 a.m. Virginia’s Travelers Café, 3820 Cornhusker Highway. Air National Guard retirees: LAST Monday of each month, 7 a.m., Stauffer’s Café, 5600 S. 48th Street.

North Platte area retirees: SECOND Saturday of each month, 8 a.m., Airport Inn, North Platte.

If any other towns have retiree breakfasts and want to share that information, please let us know and we’ll add you to the list so others can join you.

If you have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact us at (402) 309-7303 or (402) 309-7305. We’ll get you pointed in the right direction to ensure you start receiving your retirement benefits on time.

We strive to ensure all our members receive quality information and service.

We look for suggestions and comments to make our product better.

DEERS/ID Card Stations


- ♦ G1 – 2433 N.W. 24th Street, Lincoln, NE 68524: (402) 309-8167/8168/8169;
- ♦ “Spirit of 1776” Armory 1776 N. 10th St. Lincoln, NE: 68508 (402) 309-7359/7373;
- ♦ Penterman Armory 2400 N.W. 24th St. Lincoln, NE 68524: (402) 309-1724/1719;
- ♦ Air Guard (Lincoln Air Base) Bldg 600 Room E209: (402) 309-1542;
- ♦ Norfolk Armory 817 S. 1st St. Norfolk, NE 68701: (402) 309-8900/8908;

- ♦ Kearney Armory 5710 Airport Road Kearney, NE 68847: (402) 309-7758/7752;
- ♦ 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), 220 County Road A, Bldg. 508, Ashland, NE 68003: (402) 309-7148/7160;
- ♦ Offutt Air Force Base: (402) 294-2374;
- ♦ The number for DEERS is 1-800-538-9552.

Remember, you need two forms of ID when you arrive for your appointment.


Street Talk

“What is the most valuable thing you learned at annual training this year?”



Senior Airman Zach Olsen
155th Air Refueling Wing
“Integration with active duty was fluid with no spin-up time.”


Pfc. Bryce Bohlender
1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance)
“Refining the skills necessary for assessing a casualty.”






Chaplain (Capt.) Cody Hollist
155th Air Refueling Wing
“I do a lot of A.T. for Strong Bonds. It’s amazing how much couples can deal with and still have great marriages.”

Airman 1st Class Makael Lanum
155th Air Refueling Wing
“I felt like we got more hands-on experience with what it would be like if we were to deploy.”





Spc. Joshua Schloffeld
92nd Troop Command
“I learned how to draw and issue ammunition.”

Spc. Mitchell Patzel
267th Ordnance Company
“How to prepare for a class as an instructor.”



Digital means critical to telling our story

I have come to the realization that I am a digital immigrant.

As much as I would like to believe that I am a digital native, I am not. That falls to the generations born after me who have never known a world without the internet, email, texting, Facebook, Instagram and Google.

While I would like to believe that I am a fully assimilated digital immigrant, I am not. The great thing is that we have digital natives spread throughout our formations and most importantly in the Public Affairs offices of the Wing, the Public Affairs Detachment and the Joint Force Headquarters. It is because of these digital natives that we have been more active on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.

In fact, Staff Sgt. Heidi McClintock who is assigned to the 111th Public Affairs Detachment and works full-time in the Joint Force Headquarters in our Public Affairs office, is a digital native who is my coach on using social media.

It’s really important for me to have a social media coach. Back in the 2006 or so, I signed up for

“Here To Serve”

The Adjutant General

Daryl Bohac



the creation of my official FaceBook page, which you can find by searching for Major General Daryl Bohac. The purpose of this page is to have yet another opportunity to share our story with the Face-book community. The most recent posts told the story of our contacts

a Twitter account. I immediately gained one follower whom I am sure was not very entertained or informed given my lack of activity, or should I say lack of tweets!

Anyway, when I checked back in late 2009 I discovered I now had three followers: the original person, the Wingman Project, and some lady looking for a date!

So why go digital? Because that is where the future of our organization interacts with the world.

We are in a steep competition for talent; for young people who are relatively healthy, have at worst only minor indiscretions in their past and are willing to make sacrifices in order to achieve their goals. Today’s 18- to 26-year-old views the world through a digital lens and we have to place ourselves in the range of that lens.

For those reasons, I agreed to

with our Congressional delegation during which we presented Nebraska National Guard seals which were created by our Soldiers.

My official page is only part of the digital effort to get our story out. We need the story of the Nebraska National Guard to be part of the conversations that are ongoing in the communities we serve. Digital engagement strategies must be part of who we are today and in the future.

We do amazing things in the Nebraska National Guard and the use of social media will be a significant part of sharing those stories.

I challenge you to share your stories with our Public Affairs experts and let them integrate those stories in to our overall efforts to engage our communities and attract our future. I look forward to seeing your stories in our digital community!

As changes come to Nebraska Guard, embrace approaching opportunities

During the upcoming months, members of the Nebraska National Guard will be hearing one particular word a lot.

That word is change. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines change as: 1. To make different in some particular; 2. To make radically different; 3. To give a different position, course or direction to; 4. To replace with another; 5. To make a shift from one to another.

When a person looks at those definitions, one quickly sees the fact that change is all around us. The soil we walk upon is constantly changing. The way we communicate with one another and the world at large is constantly changing. Our government is constantly changing. The ways we work and the ways we pursue recreation constantly change over the years.

So, why is it that the word ‘change’ can bring with it so much anxiety, so much fear, so much apprehension?

I wish I had an answer to that question. However, as I look at it I realize that change is probably the one part of our lives – both professionally and privately – that remain the most consistent. In fact, if things didn’t change, perhaps that would be a reason to become nervous.

In the coming months, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard will be hearing a lot about

My Turn

Lieutenant Colonel

Kevin J. Hynes



it faced. The same can be seen in Nebraska.

Post-World War I and World War II, the Nebraska National Guard saw major changes, including the establishment of the Nebraska Air Guard brought on by the strategic and economic environments. Back in the 1990s Nebraska

underwent several major force structure changes as the 155th Reconnaissance Group transformed into what would become the 155th Air Refueling Wing while the 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) transformed into an area support group and finally the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade.

These changes affected literally every single Soldier and Airman in the Nebraska National Guard, and they were traumatic at times. They changed how we train, how we recruit and how we operated. But, they also set the course of what we were to become and how we would face the challenges of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

So, we should take some comfort in the fact that we have done this before and we have the tools and expertise to recreate our organization in ways that will have a major impact on the future of the Nebraska National Guard for generations to come. In fact, when it comes to change, we’re pretty good at it.

So, let change come. Nebraska is ready.

changes as they relate to the current force structure across the state. And these changes will not be insignificant. They will dramatically shift the way that this organization looks, the ways that it operates and the ways that it will train for state and federal missions.

For those younger members of our organization – say those that have joined in the past decade or so – these changes may become perhaps the single most important events of their military careers. And that will be understandable because change can be a traumatic experience.

However, as the Nebraska Army National Guard learns more about these changes, I would suggest that we take at least some small comfort in knowing that this is not the first time that significant changes have occurred in this organization’s history.

Far be it, in fact.

Taking a step back, when one looks at the military’s history, you see constant change as America constantly adjusted its force structures to best meet the ever-changing strategic environment

Worth Repeating

(Taken from ‘Nebraska’s Militia, The History of the Army and Air National Guard (1854-1991)’)

‘The Midwesterner is attuned to a certain work ethic and once he or she is given an assignment, regardless of their assets, they roll up their sleeves and get the job done.’

—Maj. Gen. Stanley M. Heng
Nebraska adjutant general (1987-2000)

‘They (the 1st Nebraska) met the storm, no man flinching, and their fire was terrible. To say they did well is not enough. Their conduct was splendid. They alone repelled the charge.’

— Brig. Gen. Lew Wallace describing the Nebraska militia’s role during the Battle of Fort Donelson, February 1862

Small school improving state’s shooting skills

By **Spc. William Schneider**
Staff Photojournalist

Can something big come from small places? In the case of Nebraska’s Small Arms Firing School, it seems it can. Conducted at the Greenlief Training Site during the first week of April, the school is used “to enhance training and marksmanship techniques of the best proven marksmen in the state,” according to Lt. Col. Todd Stevens, Nebraska National Guard state marksmanship coordinator who plans and conducts the week-long course. Stevens said the school focuses primarily on training shooters in proven techniques and positions using the M-16 rifle and M-9 pistol. Those techniques are reinforced throughout the week while conducting live-fire exercises on the site’s known distance rifle and

competition pistol ranges. The goal, said Stevens, isn’t to simply build a championship National Guard shooting team – although that is one of the benefits of the school – but rather to increase weapons proficiency throughout the Nebraska National Guard. “SAFS trained shooters have taken our techniques and used these to train others within their units,” said Stevens. “These units have shown improved results while conducting their (individual weapons qualifications).” According to Sgt. 1st Class Scott Krul, a member of the 1057th Transportation Company, the course is making a huge impact across the state. “The class is outstanding,” Krul said. “Lieutenant Colonel Stevens’ classroom drives the techniques home to be able to go into competition and qualification with more confidence and we’ve seen better results because of that.”

Krul said students leave the school capable and encouraged to go back to their units to help spread what they learned. For his unit that was very much the case. “We qualified 100 percent of our Soldiers while at the range,” said Krul, adding that of the 101 unit Soldiers who qualified, 91 of them – or 90 percent – were first time go’s. 1st Lt. Travis Wahlmeier, Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry (Long Range Surveillance), also witnessed a remarkable turnaround during his unit’s weapons qualifications. According to Wahlmeier, during the weapons qualification another unit was running the zero range. Realizing that he would not be able to talk to the entire unit, he decided to pull a detachment sergeant and several team leaders aside and had them shoot three rounds the traditional way and then three rounds the SAFS way. “All agreed – without me prompting – that it was a more stable

position and felt good,” Wahlmeier said. “Typically these guys score at or in the low 30s. They shot the (qualification) my way and did not score less than a 38.” Count Staff Sgt. Randall Barnason, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry, also among the converted. He said he brought the techniques to his unit and saw an almost immediate impact. “The qualification went even better than I expected,” Barnason said. “I had an impromptu class before we went to zero our M-4s and demonstrated and taught the principles instructed during the course. All (of the Soldiers) were receptive of the information and based upon our scores, really took it to heart.” “Young soldiers that had previously had trouble even qualifying shot low 30s and it was a joy to watch them shoot well,” he said. “Out of our troop I would estimate we had 95 percent first time go’s. We had one Soldier shoot a 40 (qualification)

and many others shoot expert and sharpshooter.” Those results echo what is going on at the state level, as well. Recently, during this year’s Winston P. Wilson National Matches, where the team was comprised of Stevens, 1st Sgt. Ryan Johnson from the 1195th Transportation Company, and Master Sgt. Bill Cary and Krul with the 1057th Trans. Co., competed against some of the best Guard shooters the nation has to offer. Stevens said the Nebraska National Guard’s state marksmanship team finished second at the Winston P. Wilson competition, held during the last week of April in Camp Robinson, Arkansas. “This is our best finish in the past 15 years,” Stevens said. That’s a pretty remarkable accomplishment for a program that not all that long ago was competing annually for national

See SCHOOL on 20.



Photos by Spc. William Schneider

Taking Aim: (Far left) Tech Sgt. Matt Wattier from the 155th Air Refueling Wing and other Soldiers from the Nebraska National Guard fire their 9mm pistols during the Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, Aug 7-9, at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



Steady Position: (Far left) Sgt. Seth Gorham, 267th Ordnance Company, and other competitors fire their M-16 rifles from a kneeling position during the Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise.



Getting Ready: Spc. Michael Clark with the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 126th Chemical Battalion, lays down a target to dry in the sun.



And They’re Off: Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen climb through an obstacle course during the Pershing competition of the Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise at the Greenlief Training Site.

Giving Their All

■Nebraska Guard’s top marksmen descend upon Greenlief Training Site for annual shooting competition

By **Spc. William Schneider**
Staff Photojournalist

Heat, humidity and the sounds of rifles and pistol shots made for a picture-perfect setting for this year’s Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise, held Aug. 7-9 on the rolling prairie shooting ranges of Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska. There, 159 Nebraska National Guard Airmen and Soldiers representing 35 units from across the state competed for bragging rights, medals and trophies during a week-end shooting competition that is one of the most eagerly anticipated and hotly contested of the year. And when the smoke finally cleared, a number of champions had emerged. Winning the overall State Command Sergeant Major Match trophy was 1st Lt. Travis Wahlmeier, representing Troop C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), while Sgt. 1st Class Brian Blankenship, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-376th Aviation, won the Gary Anderson Trophy for the highest aggregate score of the two Excellence in Competition Matches. Taking home the biggest award – the overall Adjutant General’s Combat Team Trophy – ‘Squirrel’s Tail,’ a team of Soldiers from Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry: Wahlmeier, Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer, Sgt. Scott Kuzminski and Sgt. Robert Stern. As the name implies, maintaining the competition’s presence in the Guard is considered a crucial part of sustaining a high level of marksmanship among Nebraska’s troops. “Marksmanship is just fundamental to being a Soldier and Airman,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, Nebraska adjutant general. “So our ability to do this every year for three days – to bring folks out and get them on the ranges – is a training benefit to us.” “But it’s a challenge for all of

See MARKSMANSHIP on 20.

Small army supports yearly shooting event

By **Spc. William Schneider**
Staff Photojournalist

Looking downrange through a weapons sight at a simple target over 100 meters away and firing off a round in only seconds, one may often forget the amount of time and effort it takes behind the scenes to pull off a major three-day marksmanship competition. The 2015 Adjutant General’s Marksmanship Sustainment Training Exercise brought in over 40 Soldiers over several days to cut down cardboard, paste over 600 targets and practice operating the firing lines and target pits. Sgt. 1st Class Shada Robinson, a member of the Joint Force Headquarters, oversaw the target construction for the competitions various matches. “We have a mix of support troops,” she said. “Soldiers from several different units and all across the state working together.” What may seem to be run-of-the-mill work by some, was seen with a different perspective by Sgt. Dillon Lupton of the 623rd Engineering Company. “The experience of it and camaraderie,” Lupton, who volunteered to help, said of the opportunity to help. “It’s something new... I haven’t done it before.” “I’m probably not good enough shot to (compete in the competition,) but it is fun to be behind the scenes,” he said. With this kind of support it’s no wonder the competition, one of the largest in the nation, continues to produce successful firing lanes for its competitors every year.

Hard Chargers: Young runners charge out on to the “Thunder Run” course during the Aug. 8 1-mile fun run at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.



Photos by Lt. Col. Kevin Hynes

Perfect Storm

■Women’s winner breaks course record again setting stage for three-peat in 2016

By Tech. Sgt. Jason Melton
Staff Photojournalist

The *Weather Channel* was calling for a 100 percent chance of showers, which made the likelihood of a dry race day extremely unlikely for the 480 plus participants in this year’s KFOR/National Guard Thunder Run.

Fortunately the contestants didn’t let that dampen their quest to compete for top places or personal records as they gathered upon the tarmac at near the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Aug. 8.

Vast puddles from an early morning rain storm reflected the sun as it peaked through the clouds and lapped up the water, leaving a visible haze of humidity as runners warmed up for the annual 5-kilometer and 1-mile races.

“I feel really good right now,” said Hayley Sutter, 26, after the Lincoln native rolled out a new women’s Thunder Run 5-kilometer course record for the second year in a row, breaking the tape with a strikingly fast time of 17:45 — 36 seconds ahead of her previous record. Coming in second in the overall female category with a time of 18:53 was Michelle Paxton, 38, also from Lincoln.

“My goal coming out here (was to) beat the Club A Standard, which is 17 minutes, 50 seconds,” Sutter said. “I was getting really tired that last mile and kept looking at my watch until that last straightaway when I saw that time clicking down and it was a lot closer to 17:50 than I wanted it to be. I



On The Move: Runners run along the KFOR/National Guard Thunder Run 5-kilometer course as the Nebraska Army National Guard hangar, the state capitol and the Lincoln skyline rise in the distance.

came in under 17:50, so right now I’m feeling pretty good.”

“The Thunder Run is a fun race,” said Trevor Vidlak, 24, of Lincoln who took the overall 5-kilometer run finishing in 15:27. “I haven’t been up here for a few years, so it was good to get back and run this track again.”

Vidlak’s time put him comfortably ahead of second place finisher, Colin Morrissey, 25, from Omaha, Nebraska, who completed the race in 15:49.

“The Thunder Run is important for two reasons,” said Maj. Gen. Daryl L. Bohac, the adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard. “It gives us the opportunity to engage with the community and allows us to embrace community fitness values. Both are important



Heading Toward A Repeat Championship: Hayley Sutter of Lincoln, Neb., approaches the final stage of the 2015 KFOR/National Guard 5-kilometer race, Aug. 8, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb. Hayley broke the women’s course record for the second year in a row with a time of 17:45 — 36 seconds faster than her previous record.

to our recruiting population.”

Bohac said he especially enjoys watching the youngsters come out and give it their best. “Some of them are happy when they cross and some not so happy, but they are out here trying and they are starting early... that’s what’s important,” he said.

Starting early is commonality first-place finishers Vidlak and Sutter share. Vidlak said he started running when he was a little kid and began getting serious about it when he was in high school. He took it to another level his freshman year at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln running for the school

through his senior year.

Sutter started a running in 8th grade after a traumatic injury left her with a severed Achilles tendon. “The doctors told me I would never run again and would always walk with a limp,” she said. “I became a runner to prove him wrong and I think I’ve been doing a pretty good job of that.”

To Bohac, races like the Thunder Run are about preparation and discipline. “That’s what we want in the people who join our team, he said. “Be disciplined and be ready, because you never know when you’ve got to go.”

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them to be able to get out there and test themselves,” he said.

According to the competition organizers, the AGMSX involves a number of combat elements that normally get overlooked during normal weapons qualification. This is part of what makes the event and the training value so important.

“The matches are fairly combat oriented and under time pressure,” said Lt. Col. Todd Stevens, match director. “If you have a weapons malfunction, you deal with it. It’s a training exercise. (The competitors will) have an opportunity to zero and shoot more rounds through a rifle than normal in three years of weapons qualification.”

The common phrase ‘Train as We Fight’ does seem to pervade the mindset of all at the competition.

“You want people more proficient in how we actually engage an enemy in combat conditions,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Bare, a competitor from Training Center Command.

“Competition brings out the best in the Soldiers,” added Bare.

Bare said the added training from the competition, which has three ranked categories –novice, open and pro, was better than the normal, once-a-year, training that Guardsmen normally receive to prepare them for their annual weapons qualification.

“I like it better than normal



Photo by Spc. William Schneider

drill, whether I do well or not, as it gets me good marksmanship training,” said Spc. Russell Glassmeyer, 1074th Transportation Company.

Stevens, who is no stranger to competition after winning the overall state titles in 2011 and 2012, praised not only about the Soldiers making it through the hot and steamy weekend, but the training site itself.

“It’s a good quality and fantastic training site,” he said. The site is so good, actually, that Greenleaf was actually chosen to host the 2014 Marksmanship Advisory Committee Region V Regional Shooting competition, which brought shooters from seven other nearby states to compete.

That fact doesn’t seem to be lost on the shooters, either. Wahlmeier, who took home the State Com-

mand Sergeant Major Match award that aggregates all the individual shooter scores, said this was his first overall win after four years of attending the competition. Now it seems like he’ll pay it forward and consider being a coach next year, thus helping out the next batch of shooters.

“Next year I might help out with support staff. Maybe do some coaching or something like that,” Wahlmeier added.

Ultimately, said Bohac, the extra training the competitors receive during the AGMSX impact the entire skills and readiness of the Nebraska National Guard. .

“Today you have the best trained and the best equipped, probably the most ready National Guard I’ve seen in my 30 some year career history,” Bohac said.

The following is a list of results from the competition:

Match #225 Individual Service M9 Pistol Championship is an aggregate score of Pistol Matches 221 Excellence in Competition (EIC) and 269 M9 Qualification.

Novice Class: 3rd- Spc. Matthew Miller; 2nd- Staff Sgt. Daniel Wilkins; 1st- Sgt. Robert Stern.

Open Class: 3rd- Staff Sgt. Jarod Epp; 2nd- Sgt. 1st Class Steven Brewer; 1st- 1st Lt. Travis Wahlmeier.

Pro Class champion: Sgt. 1st Class Adam Borer.

Match #325 Individual Service Rifle Championship is an aggregate of matches 321 EIC, 369 M16 Qualification and 302 Reflexive Fire.

Novice Class: 3rd- Sgt. Robert Stern, 2nd- Sgt. Zachary Homes, 1st- Spc. Matthew Miller.

Open Class: 3rd- 1st Lt. Travis Wahlmeier; 2nd- Staff Sgt. Peter Gross-Rhode; 1st- Sgt. Brandon Pedersen.

Pro Class champion: Staff Sgt. Shawn Murphy.

Match #240 General George S. Patton Combat Pistol Team Match which requires a four person team to engage six targets at various distances concentrating on fire distribution.

3rd- Team “Here to Help,” Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion, (1st Lt. David Stott, Staff Sgt. Josiah Smith, Staff Sgt. Bo Feltz, Spc. Kody Krantz); 2nd- Team “Aviation Gold,” Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-376th Aviation, (Sgt. 1st Class Brian Blankenship, Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Hartman, Staff Sgt. Alex Peyton, Staff Sgt. Steven Paulson); 1st- Team “Squirrel’s Tail.”

Match #250 Combat Pistol Team Championship is a combined aggregate of all four team member’s Match 225 Individual scores and the Match 240 General George S. Patton Pistol Team Score.

3rd- Team “Here to Help,” 2nd- Team “Aviation Gold,” 1st- Team “Squirrel’s Tail.”

Match #340 General John J. Pershing Team Rifle Match requires a four person team to distribute fire to engage multiple targets at various distances concentrating on fire distribution.

3rd- Team “Best of the West,” 1057th Transportation Company (Sgt. 1st Class Scott Krul, Sgt. Enrique Rodriguez, Spc. Eric Holmes, Spc. Levi Loomis), 2nd- Team “Squirrel’s Tail,” 1st- Team “Team Alpha,” 267th Ordnance Company (Chief Warrant Officer 3 Craig Niemeyer; Sgt. 1st Class Jason Meyer, Sgt. Benjamin Moyer, Sgt. Ryal Wood.)

Match #350 Service Rifle Team Championship is a combined aggregate of all team member’s Match 325 Individual Rifle scores and the Match 340 General John J. Pershing Team Rifle Match.

3rd- Team “Team Alpha,” 2nd- Team “LRS-2,” Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, (Sgt. 1st Class Alan Rosenthal, Staff Sgt. Joshua Ames, Staff Sgt. Scott Seals, Staff Sgt. Dennis Sedlacek,) 1st- Team “Squirrel’s Tail.”

Match #355 Team Assault Plate Match has teams navigating obstacles and then firing 10 rounds each at 121inch plates from a distance of 200 yards.

3rd- Team “LRS-2,” 2nd- Team “623rd A,” 623rd Engineer Company (Staff Sgt. Joshua Sladky, Staff Sgt. Brandon Lee, Sgt. Joseph Kumar, Sgt. Shiloh Little), 1st- Team “Dead on the Money,” 155th Air Refueling Wing (Staff Sgt. Peter Gross-Rhode, Tech. Sgt. David Mace, Tech. Sgt. Matthew Wattier, Staff Sgt. Matthew Wiesner.)

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championship at Winston P. Wilson, but in recent years has seen some struggles.

Krul is representative of that resurgence. A year ago, Krul finished in the low end of the novice division. This year, after completing the SAFS, he ranked 12th overall among the division with more experienced marksmen.

Wahlmeier is another success story. Having attended the past two SAFS, Wahlmeier was the winner of the overall State Command Sgt. Maj. Match Award at the recent 2015 Adjutant General Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise – formerly known as the TAG Shoot. He directly credited the SAFS in helping him win the individual championship.

“Everything that got me to where we’re at now has all come from either senior NCOs within the unit or the Small Arms Firing School that’s put on by the marksmanship unit,” Wahlmeier said. “That took me from an average shooter to where I am at now.”

“It’s an excellent school that teaches guys to really focus on the fundamentals,” he said.